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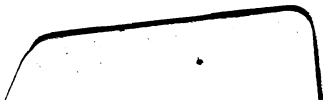
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112

THE NOVELS
OF
WILLIAM HARRISON
AINSWORTH

CABINET EDITION

This Edition of *The Novels of William
Harrison Ainsworth* is limited to 1000 copies,
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André Borel



*Dispersion of the Jacobite Club, and
Death of Cordwell Firebras.*



The Novels of
WILLIAM HARRISON
AINSWORTH

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

VOLUME II



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CONTENTS

BOOK THE SECOND (*continued*)

TRUSSELL BEEHCROFT

CHAP.	PAGE
<i>VI. The Fair Thomasine's visit to Hilda—Her Mysterious Communication—In what Way, and by whom, the Attempt to carry off Hilda was prevented—The Miser buries his Treasure in the Cellar</i>	<i>I</i>
<i>VII. The Progress of Mr. Cripps's Love Affair—Mr. Rathbone appears on the Scene—Stratagem of the Valet—Mr. Jukes visits the Widow</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>VIII. The Masquerade at Ranelagh, with the various Incidents that occurred at it</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>IX. Jacob brings a Piece of Intelligence to Randolph—Trussell and Randolph go to Drury Lane</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>X. The Supper at Vauxhall—Beau Villiers' Attempt to carry off Hilda defeated by Randolph</i>	<i>57</i>

vii

163048

CHAP.	PAGE
<i>XI. Randolph worsts Beau Villiers in a Duel in Tothill Fields; and is worsted Himself in a second Duel by Sir Norfolk Salusbury . . .</i>	68

BOOK THE THIRD

ABEL BEEHCROFT

<i>I. What became of Randolph after the Duel—How Hilda received the Intelligence that Randolph had been wounded in the Duel; and what passed between Cordwell Firebras and the Miser</i>	79
<i>II. Mrs. Crew—Her Solitude about her Son; and her Conversation with Abel</i>	88
<i>III. Detailing the Interview between Cordwell Firebras and Mrs. Crew</i>	107
<i>IV. Treats of the Miser's Illness; and of the Discovery of the Mysterious Packet by Hilda</i>	114
<i>V. Abel's Conduct on learning the Miser's Illness—Sir Singleton Spinke proposes to the Fair Thomasine—Randolph again Dines with Lady Brabazon—He receives a Note from Kitty Conway, and is assaulted by Philip Frewin and his Myrmidons on his way to Sup with her</i>	130
<i>VI. By what Device Philip Frewin got off; and how Randolph and Trussell were locked up in the Watch-house</i>	145

CONTENTS

ix

CHAP.	PAGE
<p>VII. <i>Kitty Conway and the little Barber play a Trick upon the Fair Thomasine—Sir Singleton Spinke is deluded into a Marriage with the pretty Actress at the Fleet</i></p>	152
<p>VIII. <i>Of the Visit of Philip Frewin and Diggs to the Miser, and what they obtained from him</i></p>	166
<p>IX. <i>Mr. Rathbone divulges his Plan to Mrs. Nettleship, and persuades her to act in concert with him and his Designs upon the Valet</i></p>	178
<p>X. <i>How Mr. Cripps's Marriage with the Widow was interrupted</i></p>	187
<p>XI. <i>"Stulte, hac nocte repetunt animam tuam; et quæ parasti, cujus erunt?"—LUCÆ xii.</i></p>	199
<p>XII. <i>Abel Beechcroft finds the Body of the Miser in the Cellar—His Reflections upon it—Jacob's Grief for his Master</i></p>	206
<p>XIII. <i>Diggs and Philip unexpectedly arrive—The Miser's Will is read, and Philip declares his intention of acting upon it—Abel unbosoms himself to Hilda</i></p>	212
<p>XIV. <i>Philip Frewin is dangerously wounded by Randolph—His last Vindictive Effort</i></p>	222
<p>XV. <i>Mr. Cripps's altered Appearance—He mystifies the Fair Thomasine about Lady Spinke—The Seizure of the Jacobite Club contrived</i></p>	234
<p>VOL. II.</p>	b

CHAP.	PAGE
<i>XVI. The Summer-house at the Chequers—The old Mill—Randolph overhears the Plot—Dispersion of the Jacobite Club, and Fate of Cordwell Firebras</i>	241
<i>XVII. In which the Wedding Day is fixed</i>	255
<i>XVIII. Detailing an Event which may possibly have been anticipated from the preceding Chapter</i>	264

LIST OF PLATES

Photogravures from the Original Etchings by
GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

DISPERSION OF THE JACOBITE CLUB, AND DEATH OF CORDWELL FIREBRAS . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE SUPPER AT VAUXHALL . . .	<i>To face page 60</i>
THE DISCOVERY OF THE MYSTERIOUS PACKET	„ 127
ABEL BEEHCROFT DISCOVERING THE BODY OF THE MISER IN THE CELLAR . . .	„ 209

Title-Page designed by FRANK BRANGWYN.

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

BOOK THE SECOND (*continued*)

TRUSSELL BEEHCROFT

VI

The Fair Thomasine's Visit to Hilda—Her Mysterious Communication—In what Way, and by whom, the Attempt to carry off Hilda was prevented—The Miser buries his Treasure in the Cellar.

DURING all this time, the miser continued to lead precisely the same life as before. Notwithstanding his application to Abel Beechcroft, Jacob Post had not quitted his master's service; for with all their bickerings and disagreements, the porter was strongly attached to him. A word, moreover, from Hilda, had turned the scale, and decided Jacob upon staying. Things, therefore, went on in their usual way. Diggs had contrived, by producing deeds and other documents, which appeared regularly executed, to convince the miser that his nephew's account of his circumstances was correct. But the project of the alliance was dropped, or suffered to remain in

abeyance, and Hilda endured no further annoyance respecting it.

But it must not be imagined she was perfectly tranquil. On the contrary, she was haunted by the recollection of Randolph, who had made a much deeper impression on her heart than she had at first supposed; and though she had made the strongest efforts to banish his image from her thoughts, they were unsuccessful. The very jealousy she had experienced increased the flame; and her casual encounter with him, as she was returning from Lady Brabazon's, tended to keep it alive. She saw nothing of him and heard nothing of him, except that her father now and then told her, with a bitter sneer, that he had become excessively dissipated. But she now began to find excuses for him, and blamed herself for having acted harshly towards him on their last interview. Her solitary life, too, contributed to foster her passion. She had little to dwell on besides him, and his image being most frequently presented to her imagination, insensibly became linked with her affections.

One morning, when her father was from home, and she was sitting in her own room, Jacob tapped at the door, and informed her that the mercer's daughter from over the way, Miss Thomasine Deacle, was below and begged to speak with her.

She instantly came downstairs, and found the young lady in question awaiting her, and very finely dressed, being attired in a red and yellow damask gown, with a red satin stomacher, crossed with ribands of the same colour, great bunches of ribands

at her ruffles, and a pretty little fly-cap similarly bedizened. She was gazing round the room with the greatest curiosity; but on seeing Hilda, rushed towards her, and wringing her hands, exclaimed, in tones of the deepest commiseration, "And is it in this miserable place that loveliness like yours is immured? What a marble-hearted tyrant your father must be!"

Hilda looked at a loss to comprehend the meaning of this address.

"I beg pardon," pursued the fair Thomasine; "but I am so horror-stricken by the sight of these naked walls, and this desolate apartment, that I may, perchance, have expressed myself too strongly. Oh! how can you exist here, Miss Scarve?"

"I contrive to do so, strange as it may appear," replied Hilda, smiling.

"This is a moment I have for months sighed for," cried the fair Thomasine, falling into a theatrical attitude. "I have longed to commune with you unrestrainedly—to form a strict friendship with you. You will soon understand me, as I understand you. Yes, Hilda Scarve and Thomasine Deacle, however disproportionate their rank, will be constant and attached friends. From this moment I devote myself to you. We have both many feelings in common. We both love, and have both been disappointed; or rather, our affections have been betrayed."

"I must beg you to cease this absurd strain, Miss Deacle, if the interview is to be continued," replied

Hilda, somewhat haughtily. "I have neither loved nor been disappointed."

"Nay, fear me not," rejoined the fair Thomasine. "Your secrets will be as secure in my bosom as in your own. I am a woman, and know of what a woman's heart is composed. I deeply sympathise with you. I know how tenderly you love Randolph Crew, and how unworthy he has proved himself of your regard."

"Really, Miss Deacle," cried Hilda, blushing, "I cannot suffer you to talk in this way."

"I only do so to show you that you may have entire confidence in me," replied the fair Thomasine. "Ah! Mr. Crew is very handsome, very handsome indeed. I do not wonder at his inspiring a strong passion."

"You are mistaken in supposing he has inspired me with one," rejoined Hilda, somewhat piqued. "I hope you do not come from him."

"Oh, no," replied the fair Thomasine; "but if I can do aught to forward the affair—if I can convey any message to him—command me."

"It is time to put an end to this nonsense," said Hilda. "If you have nothing else to speak about to me, except Mr. Randolph Crew, I must wish you a good-morning."

"One object in my coming hither, Miss Scarve, I will frankly confess, was to make your acquaintance, and I trust to form a lasting friendship with you," replied the fair Thomasine, somewhat discomposed. "But my chief motive," she added, assuming a mysterious look and lowering her voice to those

deep tones in which fearful intelligence is announced in a melodrama, "was to inform you that an attempt will be made to carry you off to-night!"

"Carry me off!" exclaimed Hilda, alarmed.

"Ay, carry you off!" repeated the fair Thomasine. "Dreadful, isn't it? But it is what all heroines, like ourselves, are subject to. I may not tell you who gave me the intelligence, but you may rely upon it. Most likely you have some suspicion of the hateful contriver of the base design. Our sex are seldom deceived in such matters. I was bound to secrecy, but I could not keep the matter from you. Whatever happens, I must not be implicated. Promise me I shall not be so."

"You shall not," replied Hilda.

"And oh! Miss Scarve," pursued the fair Thomasine, "to appreciate my regard for you—to understand me thoroughly—you must know—though I tremble to mention it—that you are my rival—yes, my rival. Your matchless charms have estranged the affections of my beloved and once-devoted Peter Pokerich. Still, I feel no resentment against you—but, on the contrary, I admire you beyond expression. A time may come when I may be useful to you; and then forget not your humble, but faithful friend, Thomasine Deacle."

"I will not—I will not," replied Hilda, who began to entertain some doubts as to her companion's sanity. "I am greatly obliged by your information, and will not fail to profit by it. Good-morning."

"Farewell!" exclaimed the fair Thomasine pathetically. "I fear I am imperfectly understood."

Hilda assured her to the contrary, and, summoning Jacob, he ushered her to the door. As soon as the fair Thomasine had departed, Hilda acquainted her aunt with the intelligence she had received. Mrs. Clinton was inclined to put little faith in it, but recommended that their relation, Sir Norfolk Salusbury, should be consulted on the subject. To this, however, Hilda objected, and Jacob Post was summoned to the conference.

"Don't say a word about it to any one—not even to master," said the porter, on being appealed to; "leave the affair to me, and I'll warrant you, Master Philip Frewin—for I've no doubts it's him—shan't wish to renew the attempt. Go to bed just as usual, and think no more of the matter. You shall hear all about it next morning."

"But had you not better have some assistance, Jacob?" said Hilda. "Such attempts are always made with sufficient force to insure their execution."

"I want no assistance, miss," replied Jacob—"not I. Half-a-dozen of 'em may come if they choose—but they shan't go back as they came, I'll promise 'em."

"I think you may rely upon Jacob, niece," observed Mrs. Clinton.

Hilda thought so too, and it was therefore resolved that nothing should be said to the miser on the subject, but that the porter should keep watch in his own way. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Scarve came home. The day passed off as usual, and Hilda and her aunt retired to rest early—a signal of intelligence passing between them and Jacob as they withdrew.

It so happened, on this particular night, that the miser, who was busy with his papers and accounts, signified his intention of sitting up late, and ordered Jacob to place another farthing candle before him, to be lighted when the first was done. This arrangement not suiting Jacob at all, he declined obeying the order, hoping his master would go to bed; but he was mistaken. The miser continued busily employed until his candle had burnt into the socket, when, finding Jacob had neglected to provide him with another, he went grumblingly to the cupboard for it. Hearing him stir, Jacob, who was on the alert, entered the room. "Do you know it's eleven o'clock, sir?" he said. "It's time to go to bed."

"Go to bed yourself, you careless rascal!" rejoined the miser angrily. "I told you I was going to sit up, and ordered you to get me another candle. But you neglect everything—everything."

"No, I don't," replied Jacob gruffly. "You're growin' wasteful, and it's my duty to check you. You're hurtin' your eyes by sittin' up so late. Come, go to bed."

"What the devil's the meaning of this, rascal?" cried the miser sharply and suspiciously. "You've some object in view, and want to get me out of the way. I shall sit up late—perhaps all night."

Seeing his master resolute, Jacob, after uttering a few inaudible words, withdrew. In another hour, he partly opened the door, and popped his head into the room. The miser was still hard at work.

"Past twelve o'clock, and a cloudy mornin'!" he cried, mimicking the hoarse tones of a watchman.

"What! still up!" cried the miser. "Go to bed directly."

"No, I shan't," replied Jacob, pushing the door wide open, and striding into the room; "it's not safe to leave you up. Them accounts can just as well be settled to-morrow. Come," he added, marching to the table, and taking up the candle, "I'll see you to bed."

"Set down the candle, rascal!" cried the miser, rising in a fury—"set it down instantly, or I'll be the death of you."

Jacob reluctantly complied, and looked hard at him, scratching his head as he did so.

"I see you've something on your mind," cried the miser fiercely. "Confess at once that you intend to rob and murder me. Confess it, and I'll forgive you."

"I've nothing to confess," rejoined Jacob. "It's merely regard for your welfare as keeps me up. If you'd be advised by me, you'll go to bed—but if you won't, you must take the consequences."

"What consequences, sirrah?" cried the miser angrily. "Are you master here, or am I?"

"You are," replied Jacob—"more's the pity. If anythin' happens, it's not my fault. I've warned you."

"Stay, rascal!" vociferated the miser, who felt somewhat uneasy—"what do you mean?—what do you apprehend?"

"I shan't tell you," replied Jacob doggedly. "I can be as close as you. You'll know if you stay up long enough."

So saying, he disappeared.

The miser was seriously alarmed. Jacob's mysterious conduct was wholly incomprehensible. He had never acted so before, and after debating with himself what it would be best to do, Mr. Scarve resolved to fetch his sword and remain on the watch. Accordingly, he crept upstairs and possessed himself of the weapon, and as he passed the ladies' chamber on his return, he heard them stirring within it, while the voice of Mrs. Clinton, issuing from the keyhole, said, "Jacob, have they been here?"

"Not yet," replied the miser in a whisper, which he tried to make as like the porter's gruff voice as possible. Fully satisfied that he had discovered a plot, but fearful of being subjected to further interrogations, which might lead to his discovery if he stayed longer, the miser hurried downstairs, muttering as he went, "Here's a pretty piece of work! That rascal, Jacob, is at the bottom of it all. I'll discharge him to-morrow morning. But first, to find out what it means. How lucky I chanced to sit up! It's quite providential."

Resuming his seat at the table, he placed the sword before him, and went on with his accounts. The door was left partially ajar, so that, being very quick of hearing, he could detect the slightest sound. One o'clock, however, arrived, and the house remained undisturbed. Another half-hour passed by—still no one came. His second candle burnt low, and he was calculating with himself whether he should light a third, or remain in the dark, when footsteps were distinctly heard on the stairs. He snatched up the

sword and rushed to the door, where he encountered Jacob, with his crabstick in his hand.

"Oh! I've caught you, rascal, have I?" he cried, seizing him and placing his sword at his throat.

"Leave go!" said Jacob, dashing him off. "Don't you hear 'em? They've come to carry off your daughter."

And snatching the candle from him, darted upstairs.

The miser's house consisted of two storeys, exclusive of the attics. His own bedroom and that of his daughter lay on the second floor. The attics were wholly unoccupied, and filled with old lumber, which no one but himself would have harboured. The doors were kept constantly locked, and the windows boarded up. But it was evident that the parties who had got into the house had effected an entrance from the roof. Indeed, Jacob soon after found this to be the case. On reaching the landing, he perceived three masked figures descending the stairs. The foremost of them, a slightly built person, rather gaily attired and provided with a lantern, turned to his companion and said, "'Pon rep! we're discovered, and had better beat a retreat." The person behind him, however, who was a stout-built fellow, seemed to be of a different opinion.

"No, curse it, no!" he cried, "we won't go back empty-handed. He is but one man, and we'll carry her off in spite of him. Lead us to Miss Scarve's chamber directly, sirrah!" he cried to Jacob, "or we'll cut your throat."

"Oppose us not, my good fellow," said the first speaker; "we mean you no harm, 'pon rep! Our

business is with your young mistress. Conduct us to her chamber, and you shall have a crown for your trouble."

"You shall have a cracked crown for yours!" cried Jacob, bringing down his crabstick with such force that, if it had hit its mark, it would have more than realised the threat. As it was, a quick spring saved the party against whom it was aimed. He let fall the lantern, and ran upstairs. The person behind him, uttering a tremendous oath, drew his sword, and made a thrust at Jacob, who parried it with his crabstick, and in his turn dealt his assailant a blow on the arm that disabled him. Howling with pain, and venting the most terrible imprecations, the fellow turned and fled, and the third person, seeing the fate that had attended his companions, followed their example. Darting upstairs, they passed through an open door in the attics, scrambled over a heap of lumber, and got through a small dormer window.

It was fortunate for the fugitives that Jacob, who was close at their heels, got entangled in the lumber, or they might not have escaped so easily. When he extricated himself they were gone, nor could he discover any trace of them. It appeared probable that they had passed over the roof of the adjoining house, and dropped upon some leads, whence they had gained a passage which was concealed from view. Thinking it unnecessary to pursue them farther, Jacob fastened the window, and descended to the lower part of the house, where he found the miser, together with Hilda and her aunt.

"Well, have you secured them?" cried Mr. Scarve.
"Hilda has told me what it all means."

"No," replied Jacob, "but I have fairly routed them."

"Who was the leader?" cried the miser—"Randolph Crew?"

"More likely your nephew," returned Jacob.
"But I can't swear to any one. There was three of 'em, and they was all masked."

"I owe you a thousand thanks for my preservation, Jacob," said Hilda.

"You may now rest in safety," replied Jacob.
"I've fastened the window, and I warrant me they won't make a second attempt."

Repeating her thanks, Hilda then retired with her aunt.

"Have you no idea who it was?" said the miser.

"Not the least," returned the other; "and I'm only sorry I couldn't identify Mr. Philip Frewin."

The miser made no reply, and whatever his suspicions might be he kept them to himself. The attempt, however, alarmed him on another account. If his house, which he had considered securely barricaded, could be so easily entered, other equally lawless characters, and whose aim might be plunder, could obtain admission. He had large sums with him, for with the true avaricious spirit, he loved to see and to handle his gold, and not even the loss of interest could induce him to part with it. Resolving to hide his treasure where it could not be discovered, on the following night, when he concluded all were

at rest, he crept stealthily downstairs with two heavy money-bags on his back. With some effort, for the lock was very rusty, he opened the door of an old disused wine cellar. There was nothing in it but an empty barrel, which lay in one corner.

Having looked anxiously round, to see that he was not watched, he laid down the bags, and crept upstairs for two more. These were heavier than the first, and he laid them down with as little noise as possible. He had to go back a third time, and returned equally laden. He then repaired to a small coal-hole adjoining, where was deposited a scanty supply of fuel—which, scanty as it was, he intended should last for many months to come—and provided himself with a shovel and an old broom. A fourth ascent supplied him with a box, in which he placed the bags, and he then commenced operations upon the floor of the cellar. With great difficulty—for he worked with the utmost caution—he got out a few bricks, and then his task became easier. Having made a hole sufficiently deep to hold the box, he deposited it within it, and covering it over with earth, restored the bricks, as well as he could, to their places—jumping upon them, and pressing them down with his feet. Lastly, he swept all the loose earth together, and tossed it into the empty barrel.

More than an hour was thus employed ; and when all was over, he leaned against the walls in a complete state of exhaustion. While thus resting himself, his eye wandered to the door, which was slightly ajar, and he thought he perceived some one

behind it. Instantly darting towards it, he threw it wide open, and beheld Jacob.

"Villain!" he shrieked, raising his shovel—"I'll murder you!"

"No, you won't," replied Jacob dauntlessly.

"What have you seen, rascal?" cried the miser, trembling with fury. "Tell me what you've seen!—speak!"

"Put down the shovel, and then I will, but not otherwise," answered Jacob. "Well, then," he added, as the request was complied with, "I've seen you bury a box."

"You have?" screamed the miser. "And you know what it contains?"

"I can guess," replied Jacob. "Some one always sees these things; and it is well for you, and those to come after you, that you were seen by an honest man like me."

"An honest man!" cried the miser ironically. "Such a one would be asleep in his bed at this hour, and not prying into his master's affairs."

"And what should his master be doing, eh?" retorted Jacob. "Shouldn't he be in bed, too, instead o' creepin' about his house, as if he was doin' some guilty deed, and afraid o' being detected? Which is worse, him as buries money, or him as looks on while it's buried? I tell you what it is, sir—in my opinion, he who acts so deserves to be robbed. Nay, I'm not goin' to rob you. Don't be afraid. But, I repeat, you deserve to be robbed. What was money made for?—not to be buried there. Spend it, and give yourself comfort. You haven't

many years to live; and then you may be put just where you've put your gold. But I preach to a deaf ear."

While Jacob was speaking, the miser remained leaning on the shovel, as if considering what he should do. At length he groaned out, "Well, you've baffled my design, Jacob. Dig up the chest."

"No, I won't," was the surly reply.

"You won't?"

"No," replied Jacob, "I'll not be art or part in anythin' of the sort. He as hides may find. Since you've buried the treasure, e'en let it rest. The secret's safe with me."

"Will you swear it?" cried the miser eagerly.

"I will, if that'll content you," replied Jacob.

"I'll trust you, then," rejoined Scarve.

"Only because you can't help yourself," muttered Jacob.

The miser took no notice of the remark, but quitting the cellar, locked the door, and fastened the padlock outside.

"You'll never enter this place without my leave, Jacob," he cried—"nor betray my secret?"

"I've sworn it!" replied the porter gruffly. And he turned off into his own room, while the miser went upstairs with a heavy heart.

Some days after this occurrence, Sir Norfolk Salusbury called upon Hilda. The Welsh baronet was rather a favourite with the miser, for though they had few qualities in common, yet Sir Norfolk's peculiar character suited him. He never asked a favour—never wanted to borrow money—never

required any refreshment. All these circumstances recommended him to the miser's good opinion. With Hilda he was a still greater favourite. She liked his stately old-fashioned manner ; and though she could have dispensed with some of his formality, she preferred it to the familiarity of the few persons of quality whom she had encountered. On the present occasion, after much circumlocution, Sir Norfolk informed the miser that there was to be a masquerade—or, as he termed it, "a grand assemblage of personated characters in masks"—in a few days, at Ranelagh, and he begged to be permitted to take his daughter to it.

"It is a useless expense," muttered the miser.

"I confess I should like to go very much," said Hilda. "I have never seen a masquerade ; and I am told those at Ranelagh are magnificent."

"This will be unusually magnificent," replied Sir Norfolk ; "and as you have expressed a wish on the subject, I will procure you a masquerading habit, and a ticket, if your father will allow you to go."

"In that case, I see no objection," said the miser, "provided I am not obliged to accompany her. I abominate such fooleries."

"I will gladly undertake the curation of her," said Sir Norfolk.

"And you are the only man I would trust her with, Sir Norfolk," rejoined Scarve. "I know you will take as much care of her as I could take myself."

Sir Norfolk acknowledged the compliment by a stately bow. And it was then arranged, to Hilda's

great satisfaction, that a court-dressmaker should wait upon her on the following day, to prepare her a dress for the masquerade. All were pleased with the arrangement; and the miser was in high glee that he had obliged his daughter without putting himself to trouble or expense; while Sir Norfolk was equally gratified in being able to afford pleasure to his fair cousin.

VII

The Progress of Mr. Cripps's Love Affair—Mr. Rathbone appears on the Scene—Stratagem of the Valet—Mr. Jukes visits the Widow.

MR. CRIPPS still continued unremitting in his attentions to Mrs. Nettleship, and had made such progress in her affections, that on Mr. Rathbone's return from the country—an event which occurred about ten days after the memorable visit to Marylebone Gardens—she told him she feared she could not fulfil her engagement with him, and besought him to allow her to break it off. But Mr. Rathbone declared he would do no such thing, and reminded her of a trifling penalty of three thousand pounds which was attached to the violation of the marriage contract on her part. He then upbraided her warmly with inconstancy; recalled to her recollection the professions of regard she had once expressed for him; and concluded by vowing to be the death of his rival.

Mrs. Nettleship bore his reproaches with the

utmost composure ; but on hearing his final threat she uttered a faint scream, and sank, overcome by emotion, into a chair. Mr. Rathbone offered no assistance ; but clapping his hat fiercely on his head, and flourishing his stick in a menacing manner, hurried out of the room.

"Oh, la !" exclaimed Mrs. Nettleship, getting up as soon as he was gone, "there will be a duel—a sanguinary duel—and I shall have caused it, wretched woman that I am !"

But no duel ensued—perhaps to the widow's disappointment. On being made acquainted with the precise terms of the contract, of which he had hitherto been kept in ignorance, Mr. Cripps looked very grave, and advised her on no account to come to a decided rupture with Mr. Rathbone.

"But the three thousand pounds can make no difference to you, Mr. Willars," says Mrs. Nettleship—"better pay it, and have done with him."

"On no account, my angel," replied her admirer. "We must manage to outwit him and obtain his consent."

And strange to say, the cunning valet did contrive, not only not to quarrel with his rival, but even to make a friend of him. Foreseeing that Mr. Rathbone would infallibly find out who he was and expose him, he determined to be beforehand with him, and he therefore told the widow that he had concocted a scheme, by which he was certain of outwitting her affianced suitor ; but it was necessary to its success that he should assume the part of his own valet, whose name was Crackenthorpe Cripps.

"I don't like the idea of your being taken for a valet at all, Mr. Willars," said Mrs. Nettleship—"and I can't see what purpose it'll answer."

"It is indispensable to my scheme, my angel," replied Mr. Cripps. "You know these things are always so managed in the comedies, and they are the best models one can follow. On the stage, you constantly find masters putting on their servants' clothes, and *vice versa*. And only think, if we can trick Rathbone out of the three thousand."

"Ah, that would be something, certainly," said Mrs. Nettleship. "I must have been a fool to enter into such an engagement. But at that time I thought I loved him."

"You must indeed have been wanting in your usual judgment, sweetheart," replied Mr. Cripps; "but you hadn't seen me. The only course now left is to out-manceuvre the insensible dolt. The idea of personating my valet was suggested to me by the address of the drunken old fellow we met in Marylebone Gardens."

"I recollect," replied Mrs. Nettleship. "He called you his nephew—said your name was Cripps, and that you were Mr. Willars' valet. I remember it as well as if it had happened yesterday."

"Disagreeable occurrences always dwell in one's remembrance longer than pleasant ones," rejoined the valet, forcing a laugh. "You must introduce me to Mr. Rathbone as Mr. Cripps. Leave him to find out the rest."

The device worked exactly as its contriver desired and anticipated. Mr. Rathbone was astounded

when he learnt that his rival was a valet; and he was so staggered by Mr. Cripps' dress, assurance, and deportment, that he was firmly convinced he was a gentleman in disguise. The inquiries he made only added to his perplexity. He ascertained that Beau Villiers had a valet named Cripps; but the description given of him did not tally with the appearance of Mrs. Nettleship's lover, and at last he became satisfied that the interloper was the master, and not the man.

"I tell you what, Mrs. Nettleship," he said, one day, "this gay admirer of yours isn't what he pretends to be."

"Indeed, Mr. Rathbone!" exclaimed the widow, smiling. "What is he, then?"

"A great rake and coxcomb," replied the other angrily. "He's his own master. No, I don't mean that exactly—he's himself disguised as his valet—that's it."

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Rathbone?" simpered the widow. "I declare I don't understand you."

"Why, I mean that this valet—this Mr. Cripps, as you suppose him, is no valet at all," replied Rathbone. "He's Mr. Willars, the great beau."

"Oh, you're entirely mistaken, Mr. Rathbone," said the widow, smiling.

"I hope he means honourably by you, that's all," sneered Rathbone. "Ah! here he comes," he added, as Mr. Cripps entered the room. "Your most obedient, Mr. Willars."

"My name is Cripps, sir—Crackenthorpe Cripps,

at your service," replied the valet, with a smirk of satisfaction.

"Poh! poh! nonsense!—don't crackjaw me," cried Rathbone. "I know better. You can't impose on me, sir. I know a gentleman from a walet when I see him."

"Your opinion is too flattering, sir, to allow me to be angry at it," replied Mr. Cripps, bowing profoundly.

"There!—that bow alone would convict you," cried Rathbone; "who ever saw a walet make his honours in that style?"

"Do me the favour to try my snush," said Mr. Cripps, taking out the beau's handsomest box, which he had borrowed for the occasion.

"Further proof!" exclaimed Rathbone; "look at that snuff-box set with brilliants!—those rings on his fingers! Very like a walet, indeed."

"You shall have it all your own way, sir," said Mr. Cripps, again bowing; "but there's an old gentleman outside, who will tell you you are mistaken."

"An accomplice, I'll be sworn," cried Rathbone. "But I should like to see him." And proceeding to the passage, he returned the next moment with Mr. Jukes, while Mr. Cripps, seating himself, winked significantly at the widow. On entering the room, the old butler glanced round it curiously.

"Well, sir, you look like a servant, at all events," cried Mr. Rathbone. "Pray, who is the individual before us?—who is he?"

"I am sorry to betray him, because he's my own

kinsman," replied Mr. Jukes; "but I cannot suffer him to impose on a respectable lady."

"Who did you say he is?" demanded Rathbone.

"I repeat, I'm sorry to expose him," replied Mr. Jukes; "but the truth must be told. He's my nephew, Crackenthorpe Cripps, chief valet to Mr. Villiers."

"There, sir, I told you my statement would be corroborated," said Mr. Cripps, with a side glance at the widow.

"Why, does he own that his name is Cripps?" said the butler, in astonishment.

"He would make us believe so," replied Rathbone; "but we know, as yourself, you old deceiver, that it's Willars."

The butler looked thoroughly mystified.

"Pon rep! this is vastly amusing," said Mr. Cripps, helping himself to a pinch of snuff, and clearing his point-lace cravat from the dust.

"And so you, ma'am, are aware of the real name of this young man?" said Mr. Jukes, turning to the widow.

"Perfectly aware of it," she replied significantly.

"And so am I," added Rathbone, coughing drily.

"We're all aware of it—all."

"Then I've nothing further to say," returned Mr. Jukes. "Whatever construction may be put upon my visit, Crackenthorpe, I only came here to serve you."

"No doubt, my good man, no doubt," replied Rathbone. "But don't imagine you've deceived me."

"So that I've convinced the lady, I'm perfectly satisfied," said Mr. Jukes, taking his leave.

"Very well contrived, Mr. Willars—exceedingly well, sir," said Rathbone; "but it won't do. I saw at once he was one of your people."

"You are a man of great discernment, truly," replied Mr. Cripps. "Pray take a pinch of snush before you go."

"I'm afraid you spend your wages in snush, sir," laughed Rathbone. And plunging his fingers into the box, he quitted the room, chuckling to himself.

"Capitally done, 'pon rep!" cried Mr. Cripps. "The old fellow couldn't have played his part better."

"And was he really engaged to do it?" said Mrs. Nettleship. "Well, I declare, he quite took me in. But you see Mr. Rathbone is too good a judge to be imposed upon. He knows the true gentleman when he sees him."

"All is going exactly as I could wish it, my angel," replied Mr. Cripps. "Before a month has passed, I'll make him give up the contract."

"Heigho!" exclaimed the widow, "I wish the month was over."

Mr. Cripps had thus completely accomplished his purpose. His rival had made up his mind that he was Mr. Villiers; and he was one of those obstinate persons who always persist in an error, even against the evidence of their senses. The valet took care to humour the idea. While persisting in giving his real name, and representing himself in his true character, Mr. Cripps demeaned himself in such

sort as to leave no doubt in the mind of the sagacious tallow-chandler that his actual rank and position were widely different. Nothing, however, surprised the valet more than the kindly manner in which his rival behaved to him. So far was this carried, that he began to suspect some treachery might be intended against himself, and resolved to be on his guard. But whatever secret opinions the rivals might entertain of each other, ostensibly they were excellent friends, and constantly went to places of amusement together.

When the masquerade at Ranelagh was announced, Mrs. Nettleship instantly signified her intention of attending it, and Mr. Cripps, emboldened by his former good luck, unhesitatingly undertook to escort her. Mr. Rathbone, of course, was included in the party, and he not only begged to be permitted to pay for the tickets, but to give them a supper on the occasion. With apparent reluctance, Mr. Cripps assented to the proposal; and they then arranged the characters they should represent. The valet, being an excellent dancer, thought he should appear to advantage as harlequin; and as Mrs. Nettleship, notwithstanding her bulk, still boasted considerable agility, she readily undertook to play columbine. The part of the humpbacked lover was offered to Mr. Rathbone, and accepted by him.

There were yet two other persons whom the irresistible masquerade threatened to draw into its vortex. These were the fair Thomasine and Peter Pokerich. For more than two years the mercer's daughter had been dying to see a masquerade; and

the moment she heard of the grand entertainment in question, she attacked her father on the subject, and never allowed him to rest till he promised to let her go.

Peter Pokerich required no solicitation to induce him to accompany her, being as eager as herself for the spectacle. Mr. Cripps had imparted to him his design, and it was arranged that they should all go together. Only one difficulty existed, namely, that the fair Thomasine had selected the same character as the widow. But this objection was got over by Mr. Cripps, who declared he could do very well with two columbines. The little barber himself would have preferred playing harlequin; but, as Mr. Cripps had appropriated the part, he was obliged to be content with that of clown.

VIII

The Masquerade at Ranelagh, with the Various Incidents that occurred at it.

At length the day so much wished for by the principal personages in this history, and by many hundreds besides, arrived. It was the second Thursday in July, and a more joyous and auspicious day never ushered in a festival. This was the more fortunate, because the early part of the entertainment was to take place out of doors. The fête commenced at two o'clock; but long before that hour, the road to Chelsea was crowded with coaches, chariots, chairs,

and vehicles of every description. The river, too, was thronged with boats freighted with masquers, and presented a most lively appearance from the multitudes of spectators drawn forth by the fineness of the day and the gaiety of the scene, which vied in splendour with a Venetian carnival.

Having decided upon going by water, Mr. Cripps and his party left Billiter Square about one o'clock, and embarked in a tilt-boat, rowed by a couple of watermen, at Old Swan Stairs, near London Bridge. They were all, of course, in their masquerade attire, Mr. Cripps being arrayed in the parti-coloured garb of the hero of pantomime—which differed only in some immaterial points, such as the looseness of the pantaloons at the ankle, and the amplitude of the shirt collar, from the garb of the modern harlequin. He was provided with a wand, and his face was concealed by a close black vizard. Mr. Rathbone had a large hump on his shoulders, like that of Punch (whom, by-the-bye, his figure greatly resembled), a well-stuffed paunch, a large protuberance behind, shoes with immense roses in them, a tall sugar-loaf hat, and a mask with a great hooked nose and chin. He carried, moreover, a stout knobbed stick.

As to the lady, her goodly person was invested in a white satin habit, glistening with spangles, and flounced with garlands of flowers. She had short sleeves, with deep falls of lace to them; satin shoes, braided with silver cord; a pearl necklace round her throat, and a wreath of artificial roses upon her head. She declined hiding her features behind a

mask, which Mr. Cripps declared was excessively kind and considerate.

Their passage along the river was delightful, Mr. Cripps being so excited that he could not be content to remain under the tilt, but displayed himself in the fore part of the boat, ogling all the prettiest damsels among the spectators, retorting the jests of their male companions, and whenever an opportunity offered, dealing them a hearty thwack with his wand.

Mrs. Nettleship did not altogether relish these proceedings ; but Mr. Rathbone enjoyed them amazingly, and laid about him right and left, like his rival, with his knobbed stick. On landing at Chelsea, they met, according to appointment, the little barber and his companion.

The fair Thomasine looked uncommonly pretty. She had on a gown of yellow and silver, spangled like the widow's, and adorned with garlands of flowers, with a bodice of pink satin, crossed with ribands of the same colour. Round her throat she wore a chain of gold, from which depended an imitation diamond solitaire ; and her rich auburn tresses were covered with the prettiest little coquettish hat imaginable. Her dress was purposely made short, so as to display her small feet and ankles. From the same motive also as the widow, she declined wearing a mask. Mr. Cripps was quite captivated by her, and claiming the privilege of his character, took her from the barber, and offered her his unoccupied arm.

Peter Pokerich wore a skull cap, covered with red

and white worsted, arranged somewhat like a cock's-comb, a large ruff, a red calico doublet, white slashed calico drawers, with huge bunches of ribands at the knees, and pink silk hose. His face was painted in red and white streaks. Like the others, he was in tip-top spirits; and the whole party proceeded to Ranelagh, which was not far distant, laughing and jesting with each other merrily. They found the road from town completely stopped up by a line of carriages, while the throng of spectators on foot rendered it difficult to get on. The familiarities of the crowd were almost unsupportable. Not a coach or a chair was suffered to pass without its occupant being inspected by the curious, who, in many cases, compelled those they annoyed to let down the windows that they might have a better view of their dresses.

By dint of elbowing and squeezing, assisted by the wand and knobbed stick, the party contrived to move slowly forward; and as they did so, they had ample opportunity of glancing at the occupants of the different vehicles. Mr. Cripps very soon distinguished his master's gilt chariot; but he did not turn aside, as his mask and dress insured him from detection. Mrs. Nettleship was struck by the magnificence of the equipage, and recalling the features of the beau, who was wrapped in a sky-blue domino, and wore a Spanish hat and feathers, but kept his mask in his hand, said—

“Why, that's the fine gentleman who spoke to you in Marylebone Gardens. What's his name?”

“Odd enough! the same as my own—Villiers,”

replied Mr. Cripps. "He's a first cousin of mine, and we're considered very much alike."

By the side of Mr. Villiers sat Sir Singleton Spinke. The antiquated beau was so metamorphosed, that Mr. Cripps scarcely recognised him; nor would he perhaps have done so, if the charms of the fair Thomasine had not attracted the old coxcomb's attention, and caused him to thrust his head out of the window to look at her. Sir Singleton, as favouring his turn for gallantry, had chosen the part of Pierrot, and was habited in the peculiar vestment of white calico, with long, loose sleeves, as well as the broad-leaved, high-crowned hat proper to the character. Lady Brabazon's carriage immediately preceded that of the beau, and contained her ladyship, Clementina, Trussell, and Randolph.

Trussell was dressed like a Turk, and wore a large turban, ornamented with a crescent, and a fine, flowing, coal-black beard. Randolph did not appear in character, but was attired in a light-blue velvet coat, laced with gold, the work of the French tailor, Desmartins, which displayed his elegant figure to the greatest advantage. He had not yet put on his mask.

Clementina was robed in a pink silk domino, and wore a black velvet hat, looped with diamonds and ornamented with a plume of white feathers, and really looked very beautiful. Lady Brabazon wore a rich silk dress, embossed with gold and silver, that suited her admirably.

Next in advance of Lady Brabazon's carriage was that of Sir Bulkeley Price. The Welsh baronet was

in his ordinary attire ; but he was accompanied by a Chinese mandarin, in a loose gown of light silk, girt at the middle with a silken belt, and having a conical cap, topped by a gilded ball, on his head. This person, notwithstanding the disguise of a long twisted beard, Mr. Cripps knew to be Cordwell Firebras.

Passing several other carriages filled with various characters, they came to an old-fashioned chariot, driven by a coachman as ancient as itself, in a faded livery, and drawn by two meagre-looking, superannuated horses. But, notwithstanding its unpromising appearance, the occupant of this carriage attracted especial attention from the beholders, and many and loud were the exclamations of admiration uttered by them. "She is beautiful!" cried one. "Enchanting!" cried another. "By far the prettiest person who has gone to the masquerade," cried a third. And so on in the same rapturous strain.

Excited by these remarks, Mr. Cripps pressed forward to have a peep into the carriage, and found it occupied by Sir Norfolk Salusbury and an exquisitely beautiful young female, attired with great simplicity in a dress of white satin, with wide short sleeves, as was then the mode, trimmed with deep falls of lace. A diamond necklace encircled her throat, and a few natural flowers constituted the sole ornaments of her dark abundant hair. It was Hilda Scarve, as Mr. Cripps was instantly aware, though he had scarcely time to look at her, for Sir Norfolk, out of all patience with the familiarity of the spectators, thrust him forcibly back, and ordered

the coachman, in a peremptory tone, to drive on—an injunction with which the old domestic found some difficulty in complying.

And now, before entering Ranelagh, it may be proper to offer a word as to its history. Alas for the changes and caprices of fashion! This charming place of entertainment, the delight of our grandfathers and grandmothers, the boast of the metropolis, the envy of foreigners, the renowned in song and story, the paradise of hoops and wigs, is vanished—numbered with the things that were!—and we fear there is little hope of its revival.

Ranelagh, it is well known, derived its designation from a nobleman of the same name, by whom the house was erected, and the gardens, esteemed the most beautiful in the kingdom, originally laid out. Its situation adjoined the Royal Hospital at Chelsea, and the date of its erection was 1690–91.

Ranelagh House, on the death of the earl in 1712, passed into the possession of his daughter, Lady Catherine Jones; but was let, about twenty years afterwards, to two eminent builders, who relet it to Lacy, afterwards patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, and commonly called Gentleman Lacy, by whom it was taken with the intention of giving concerts and breakfasts within it, on a scale far superior, in point of splendour and attraction, to any that had been hitherto attempted.

In 1741, the premises were sold by Lacy to Messrs. Crispe and Meyonnet for £4000, and the rotunda was erected in the same year by subscription. From this date, the true history of Ranelagh

may be said to commence. It at once burst into fashion, and its entertainments being attended by persons of the first quality, crowds flocked in their train. Shortly after its opening, Mr. Crispe became the sole lessee; and in spite of the brilliant success of the enterprise, shared the fate of most lessees of places of public amusement, being declared bankrupt in 1744. The property was then divided into thirty shares, and so continued until Ranelagh was closed.

The earliest entertainments of Ranelagh were morning concerts, consisting chiefly of oratorios, produced under the direction of Michael Festing, the leader of the band; but evening concerts were speedily introduced, the latter, it may be mentioned, to show the difference of former fashionable hours from the present, commencing at half-past five, and concluding at nine.

Thus it began, but towards its close, the gayest visitors to Ranelagh went at midnight, just as the concerts were finishing, and remained there till three or four in the morning. In 1754, the fashionable world were drawn to Ranelagh by a series of amusements called Comus's Court; and notwithstanding their somewhat questionable title, the revels were conducted with great propriety and decorum. A procession which was introduced was managed with great effect, and several mock Italian duets were sung with remarkable spirit. Almost to its close, Ranelagh retained its character of being the finest place of public entertainment in Europe, and to the last the rotunda was the wonder and delight of every beholder.

The coup-d'œil of the interior of this structure was extraordinarily striking, and impressed all who beheld it for the first time with surprise. It was circular in form, and exactly one hundred and fifty feet in diameter. Round the lower part of the building ran a beautiful arcade, the intervals between each arch being filled up by alcoves. Over this was a gallery with a balustrade, having entrances from the exterior, and forming a sort of upper boxes. Above the gallery was a range of round-headed windows, between each of which was a carved figure supporting the roof, and forming the terminus of the column beneath. At first, the orchestra was placed in the centre of the amphitheatre; but being found exceedingly inconvenient, as well as destructive of the symmetry of the building in that situation, it was removed to the side.

It contained a stage capable of accommodating thirty or forty chorus singers. The original site of the orchestra was occupied by a large chimney, having four faces enclosed in a beautifully proportioned, hollow, hexagonal column, with arched openings at the sides, and a balustrade at the base. Richly moulded, and otherwise ornamented with appropriate designs, this enormous column had a charming effect, and gave a peculiar character to the whole amphitheatre. A double range of large chandeliers descended from the ceiling; others were placed within the column above mentioned, and every alcove had its lamp. When all these chandeliers and lamps were lighted, the effect was wonderfully brilliant.

The external diameter of the rotunda was one hundred and eighty-five feet. It was surrounded on the outside by an arcade similar to that within, above which ran a gallery with a roof supported by pillars, and defended by a balustrade. The main entrance was a handsome piece of architecture, with a wide, round, arched gate in the centre, and a lesser entrance at either side.

On the left of the rotunda stood the Earl of Ranelagh's old mansion, a structure of some magnitude, but with little pretensions to beauty, being built in the formal Dutch taste of the time of William of Orange. On the right, opposite the mansion, was a magnificent conservatory, with great pots of aloes in front. In a line with the conservatory, and the side entrance of the rotunda, stretched out a long and beautiful canal, in the midst of which stood a Chinese fishing temple, approached by a bridge. On either side of the canal were broad gravel walks, and alleys shaded by lines of trees, and separated by trimly clipped hedges. The gardens were exquisitely arranged with groves, bowers, statues, temples, wildernesses, and shady retreats.

Though Lady Brabazon's carriage was within a hundred yards of the entrance of Ranelagh when Mr. Cripps and his party passed it, owing to the crowd and confusion it was nearly a quarter of an hour in setting down. Before getting out, the whole party put on their masks; and Lady Brabazon wrapped herself in a yellow silk domino. Trussell took charge of Clementina, and her ladyship fell to Randolph's care.

It was yet extremely early, but the crowd was prodigious—many hundred persons being assembled in the area before the entrance to the rotunda. At least a thousand others were dispersed within the gardens, for the rotunda was not opened till the evening; and it was afterwards computed that more than four thousand persons attended the masquerade.

At the entrance, Lady Brabazon and her daughter were joined by Beau Villiers, Sir Bulkeley Price, and Firebras, Sir Singleton Spinke having disappeared. Randolph had already been more than once at Ranelagh, but it was only to attend the ordinary concerts, and never having seen a masquerade, he was extraordinarily struck with the spectacle presented to him.

Most of the characters were grotesquely dressed, as was the taste of the time, for it was not a period when the niceties of costume were understood or regarded; still, the general effect was admirable. A May-pole, surmounted by a crown, with long ribands dangling from it, was planted in front of the conservatory, and several dancers were chasing each other round it, while lively strains were played by a band of musicians beside them. Other and less melodious sounds were heard. Now a drummer would go by, beating a rub-a-dub enough to deafen every listener. Then came the vile scraping of a fiddle, or the shrill notes of a fife. The shouts, the laughter, the cries of all kinds, baffled description, and equally vain would it be to attempt any delineation of the motley assemblage. It consisted of persons of all countries, all periods, and all ranks,

for the most part oddly enough jumbled together. A pope in his tiara would be conversing with a Jew; a grave lawyer in his gown and wig had a milk-girl under his arm; a highland chief in his full equipments escorted a nun; a doge in his splendid habiliments was jesting with a common sailor, with a thick stick under his arm.

But frolic and fun everywhere prevailed; and to judge from the noise, everybody seemed to be merry. No one could escape from the tricks and jests of the buffoons with whom the crowd abounded. The humour of the last century was eminently practical; cuffs and kicks were liberally dealt around, and returned in kind; and whenever a sounding blow was heard, it elicited shouts of laughter like those that are heard at the feigned knocks in a pantomime. The clowns, punches, pierrots, doctors, and harlequins, of whom there were several besides our friend Mr. Cripps, were the chief creators of this kind of merriment.

While Randolph, greatly diverted by all he saw, was gazing around, a few words pronounced by a voice whose tones thrilled to his heart caught his ear. He turned, and saw close behind him, attended by a tall personage, whose stiffness left no doubt as to its being Sir Norfolk Salusbury, a beautiful female mask, whose snowy skin and dark streaming ringlets would have told him, if his heart had not informed him of the fact, that it was Hilda, but before he could summon resolution to address her, she had passed by; and Lady Brabazon, who had likewise heard the voice and recognised the speaker,

dragged him in the opposite direction towards the May-pole. He looked eagerly backwards, but the fair mask was lost amid the throng, nor could he even discern the tall figure of Sir Norfolk.

A merry scene was before him, but he heeded it not. The chief dancers round the May-pole were Mr. Cripps and his party. To these were added Sir Singleton Spinke, who had attached himself to the fair Thomasine, to the no small annoyance of Peter Pokerich, and a fat quack doctor and his attendant, the latter having a fool's cap on his head. Round and round went the dancers, Mr. Cripps footing it with remarkable agility, and Peter vainly emulating his capers, when some confusion was created by Sir Singleton attempting to overtake the fair Thomasine, and possess himself of her hand. No more perfect pantaloon can be imagined than the old beau represented, and his gesticulations and grimaces called forth the laughter of all the spectators, which broke into shouts as, at the conclusion of the dance, Mr. Cripps gave him a sounding smack on his lean shanks, with his wand, while the jealous barber lent him a box over the ear. But this did not quench his ardour, and a gesture from the coquettish columbine, who seemed determined not to lose him, drew him after her, as she tripped along the right hand alley near the canal with the rest of her gamesome party.

Randolph would willingly have disengaged himself from Lady Brabazon, but he could not do so without positive rudeness ; and what made it worse was, that he was now left alone with her, for the

rest of the party had disappeared, and he could not help fearing Beau Villiers might have discovered Hilda, and have gone in pursuit of her.

"Come, Randolph," said her ladyship, rallying him; "you seem to have lost your spirits at the very time they ought to be at the highest. Refreshments are given in the Chinese fishing-temple. Let us go there, and try whether a glass of champagne will enliven you."

Randolph suffered himself to be led in the direction mentioned, and if he had been able to enjoy it, the scene offered to his gaze must have amused him, for it was extremely lively and diverting. The Chinese temple had been newly gilt and decorated, and its burnished pinnacles were reflected in the waters of the canal. It was filled with company, most of whom were partaking of refreshments, while an excellent band stationed in the midst of it played the liveliest airs, to which several parties on the banks of the canal were dancing. Amongst others were Mr. Cripps and his two columbines, who frolicked along the alley on the right, followed by the barber, the old beau, and Rathbone, attracting general attention.

Mr. Cripps was so agile, danced so well, and leaped so wonderfully, that it was generally supposed he was Mr. Yates, the celebrated harlequin of Drury Lane, while if the fair Thomasine had not been so pretty, she would have been taken for Mrs. Mann, the favourite columbine of the same house. As it was, she was allowed on all hands to be the best dancer in the garden; and her glances were so

bewitching, that many other persons fell in love with her beside Sir Singleton Spinke. One person, in especial, who displayed the most undisguised admiration of her, and who kept as near as he could, was a tall young man with thin sharp features, which Mr. Cripps, after puzzling his brains to recollect them, at last called to mind as belonging to the companion of Kitty Conway at the Folly on the Thames. This young man, who wore a long black silk gown, a velvet cap of the same colour, and a flowing black wig, and intended to represent an Italian doctor, it is perhaps almost needless to say, was Philip Frewin. Another admirer was a person habited as a pope, who kept constantly in their train, but whose robe and large mask precluded all idea of discovering who he was.

Neither Mr. Cripps nor his pretty columbine were displeased by the attention they attracted, and the latter returned the amorous glances cast at her by Philip, and the passionate gestures of the pope, in a manner that drove the little barber almost distracted. As to Mr. Cripps, he threw somersets over the clipped hedge, vaulted over Mr. Rathbone's hump, slapped the pope on the back, clapped the old beau on the shoulder, twirled round his head, and performed a hundred other pantomime antics, to the infinite diversion of the beholders. When arrived near the extremity of the walk, he called out to the musicians in the Chinese temple to strike up the tune, "Hey, boys, up we go!" and immediately commenced a lively dance to it with his two columbines, in which they were presently

joined by Rathbone, Sir Singleton, and the barber.

Having crossed the bridge leading to the Chinese temple, Lady Brabazon stopped, and setting Randolph at liberty, leaned against the rail at the entrance, to survey the gay crowd around. While she was thus engaged, Beau Villiers, followed by an attendant with a bottle of champagne on a silver waiter, approached her, and pressing her to take a glass, looked significantly at her, as if he had something to communicate.

Taking advantage of this fortunate interruption, Randolph sprang into a Chinese-fashioned boat lying near the bridge, and seizing the oars, rowed off towards the canal, keeping near its sides, the better to view the company. Failing, however, in discovering the object of his search, he was returning towards the bridge, where Lady Brabazon was still standing in conversation with the beau, when a roar of laughter from the dancers in the alley on the farther side of the clipped hedge attracted his attention.

This, it appeared, was occasioned by a misadventure that had just occurred to the old beau, who having been carried away by his enthusiasm at the fair Thomasine's dancing, had rushed forward with the intention of snatching a kiss from her ruby lips, when the jealous little barber, divining his intention, threw himself in his way and tripped up his heels. In this posture he presented a tempting mark for Mr. Cripps, whose wand resounded in a rapid succession of strokes upon his withered limbs. Randolph,

who had raised himself in the boat to see what was going forward, now sat down, and had just resumed the oars, when Clementina Brabazon, and another masked dame who had been conversing with Trussell and Firebras, approached the edge of the canal, and called to him.

"I know who you are searching for, Mr. Crew," cried Clementina; "and could help you to find the person if I chose."

"Then you will choose, I am sure," replied Randolph, pulling hastily towards her. "Where is she?"

"Well, I'll be good-natured," she answered. "Look behind you."

Randolph instantly turned in the direction indicated, and beheld Hilda seated at one end of the temple. Behind her stood Sir Norfolk Salusbury, while Sir Bulkeley Price was handing her a glass of champagne. But Hilda was so much occupied by what was passing on the canal, that she was not aware of the knight's attention.

As Randolph regarded her, however, she arose, and declining Sir Bulkeley's offer, took Sir Norfolk's arm, and left the temple. Heedless of Clementina's laughter, Randolph, without losing sight of Hilda, pushed the boat towards the bank, and leaning out, was about to follow her, when he was arrested by a heavy hand laid on his arm, and looking up, he beheld Cordwell Firebras.

"You are on a vain quest, young man," said Firebras, in an undertone. "You will never obtain a word with Hilda Scarve unless by my mediation."

Randulph made a movement of impatience. "Be not rash," pursued Firebras, still detaining him. "I tell you, you will totally fail in your object, and will only involve yourself in a quarrel with Sir Norfolk Salusbury."

"I care not," replied Randulph. "Let me go. By heaven! I shall lose her."

"That you most assuredly will, if you follow her now," rejoined Firebras calmly. "Be ruled by me. I will introduce you to her, but it cannot be in your own character, for Sir Norfolk has been requested by her father not to permit your approach. And I shall, therefore, have to pass you off to him as some one else."

"And you attach no condition to the obligation?" cried Randulph—"none at least that I cannot honourably comply with."

"I may perhaps remind you of it at some future time, that is all," rejoined Firebras.

"Enough!" cried Randulph. "Take me to her at once."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Firebras. "I must prepare Sir Norfolk, and give Hilda a hint of my intention, lest she should prevent it, for I perceived just now that she discovered you. Rejoin your party, and avoid exciting the suspicions of Lady Brabazon and Beau Villiers, or they may mar all. I may not perhaps be able to accomplish the object you desire till the evening, so curb your impatience."

With this, he moved off, and mingled with the crowd, while Randulph joined Lady Brabazon. Her ladyship made many sarcastic remarks upon his dis-

play upon the water, and complimented him ironically upon his skill as a rower. Randolph was in no mood for such raillery, and might have made some angry retort, but at that moment there was a great stir in the walk near the bridge, occasioned by the approach of the Prince and Princess of Wales, attended by a large retinue.

The royal party entered the temple, and remained there more than half-an-hour conversing with those around them. Randolph had the honour of a presentation to the prince by Mr. Villiers; and while engaged in conversation with that illustrious personage, he perceived Cordwell Firebras among the bystanders; but he could not, without a breach of etiquette, withdraw to speak to him, and when the royal party quitted the temple, he was gone. He was about to search for him when Beau Villiers, who had followed the Prince of Wales, hastily returned, and said, with an expression of malicious satisfaction, that he had His Royal Highness's commands to him to join his train.

Randolph had no alternative but compliance, and to his own chagrin, and his uncle Trussell's delight, he mingled with the royal attendants, and proceeded with them in their promenade through the gardens. In the course of this ramble he perceived Firebras standing with Hilda and Sir Norfolk; and though he was greatly annoyed not to be able to join them, it was some satisfaction to him to observe that his present position seemed to operate to his advantage with the lady. The performances of Mr. Cripps's party diverted both the royal personages during

their stroll, and they laughed heartily at a comic dance executed by them.

Some hours passed on in this way, and Randolph was still held in bondage. At length the rotunda was opened. Of course, the royal party was ceremoniously ushered in, in the first place; but immediately afterwards crowds poured in, and the whole area of the amphitheatre, together with the boxes and gallery above, were filled with company. What with the innumerable lights, and the extraordinary variety of dresses, the whole scene had a most brilliant effect. There was an excellent band in the orchestra, and a concert was commenced; but little attention was paid to it by the assemblage, who continued promenading round and round the amphitheatre—laughing and talking loudly with each other.

As soon as the concert was over, the loud blowing of a horn attracted general observation to a platform near the central column, on which the quack doctor and his attendant were stationed—the latter of whom began dispensing his medicines, and vaunting their efficacy, in a highly ludicrous manner. This and other entertainments consumed the time till ten o'clock; before which, however, a magnificent supper was served to the royal party in a private refreshment room.

A bell was then rung, to announce that a grand display of fireworks was about to take place, and the company hurried to the outer galleries and to the gardens to witness the exhibition. Much confusion ensued, and amidst it, the fair Thomasine,

somehow or other, got separated from her party. The little barber was almost frantic. He rushed hither and thither among the crowd, calling for her by name, and exciting general ridicule. At last, in an agony of despair, he stationed himself near the scaffold where the fireworks were placed; and when the first signal-rocket ascended, he perceived her pretty face turned upwards at a little distance from him. She was standing near the trees with the old beau, whose transports at his enviable situation were somewhat disturbed by the descent of a heavy rocket-stick on his head. At this juncture the little barber reached his truant mistress, and forcing her from Sir Singleton, placed her rounded arm under his own, and held it fast.

"Oh, dear, how glad I am to see you," said the naughty little Thomasine, for "fair" she does not deserve to be called; "we've been looking for you everywhere"—(here she told a sad story). "That odious old beau has been trying to persuade me to run away with him. He offers to settle—I don't know what—upon me, and to make me Lady Spinke."

"And why don't you accept his offer?" said the barber, in an ecstasy of jealous rage.

"Because I'm engaged, and engagements with me are sacred things," replied the fair Thomasine theatrically, yet tenderly. "But do look at that beautiful wheel."

The fireworks were really splendid. Flights of rockets soared into the skies; magnificent wheels performed their mutations; star-pieces poured forth

their radiant glories ; maroon batteries resounded ; Chinese fountains filled the air with glittering showers ; pots-des-aigrettes, pots-des-brins, and pots-des-saucissons, discharged their stars, serpents, and crackers ; yew trees burnt with brilliant fire ; water-rockets turned the canal to flame ; fire-balloons ascended ; and a grand car with flaming wheels, drawn by sea-horses snorting fire, and containing a figure of Neptune, which traversed the whole length of the canal, and encircled the Chinese temple—the bridge being removed to make way for it—and finally exploded, scattering serpents and crackers in every direction, concluded the exhibition amid the general plaudits of the assemblage. Darkness for a few minutes enveloped the crowd, during which a few cries were heard in timid female tones ; but the lamps were as soon as possible lighted, and the majority of the assemblage returned to the rotunda, where they repaired to the alcoves, and many a bowl of punch was emptied, many a bottle of champagne quaffed ; after which dancing was resumed with greater spirit than ever.

Mr. Rathbone gave a capital supper to his party, in which the old beau contrived to get himself included. He contrived also to sit near the fair Thomasine, and pledged her so often and so deeply that he fell beneath the table. Here he was left by the others, and a minuet being struck up, Mr. Cripps offered his hand to the widow, and led her forth to dance ; while Mr. Rathbone, greatly exhilarated by the punch he had drunk, stood by, laughing at them ready to split his sides ; and the

little barber took the opportunity of their being left alone together, to reprove the fair Thomasine for her improper conduct towards the old beau during supper.

Liberated by the departure of the Prince of Wales, who quitted the gardens on the conclusion of the fire-works, Randolph immediately returned to the rotunda, in the hope of finding Hilda still there. He had scarcely entered it when he perceived Firebras at supper by himself in one of the alcoves, and instantly joined him.

"She is still here," said Firebras, "and as soon as I have finished my supper I will take you to her. There would be no use in going now, for Sir Norfolk has only just ordered supper, and I can merely introduce you as a partner for a dance. Sit down, and take a glass of champagne."

Randolph declined the latter offer, and was obliged to control his impatience until Firebras thought fit to rise. Crossing the amphitheatre, they proceeded to an alcove, in which Sir Norfolk and Hilda were seated, and Firebras, bowing to the old knight, said—

"Sir Norfolk, permit me to have the honour of presenting the friend I mentioned some hours ago to your fair charge. Miss Scarve," he added, after a significant look at Hilda, "this gentleman wishes to have the honour of dancing a minuet with you. I am sorry there is no time for a more ceremonious introduction to yourself, Sir Norfolk, but the musicians are striking up the dance."

Upon this Hilda arose, and tendered her hand,

with some trepidation, to Randolph, who, with a breast thrilling with joyful emotion, led her to the open space cleared for the dancers, and part of which was already occupied, as before related, by Mr. Cripps and the widow. No time was allowed Randolph to hazard a word to his partner. Scarcely were they placed when the minuet commenced. The grace with which they performed this charming, though formal dance, excited the admiration of all the beholders, and contrasted strongly with the exaggerated style in which it was executed by Mr. Cripps and Mrs. Nettleship. Indeed, a better foil—had such been desired—could not have been found than the two latter personages presented. Sir Norfolk planted himself on one side to view the dance, and there was unwonted elation in his countenance as he witnessed the graceful movements of his fair cousin and her partner. Trussell in his Turkish dress was among the spectators; and not far from him stood Cordwell Firebras. There were two other personages, also, who watched the dance, but who regarded it with no other sentiments than those of satisfaction. These were Lady Brabazon and Beau Villiers.

“So you see, Villiers, notwithstanding all your scheming, he *has* contrived to dance with her,” said the former.

“He has,” replied the beau, partly removing his mask, and displaying a countenance inflamed with passion—“but he has not exchanged a word with her, and I will take care he shall not exchange one.”

“You are desperately in love with this girl,

Villiers," said Lady Brabazon angrily. "I thought it was her fortune merely you aimed at."

"I have been foiled, and that has piqued me," replied Villiers.

"*Le jeu ne vaut pas la-chandelle,*" rejoined Lady Brabazon. "After the failure of your attempt to carry her off, I wonder you will persevere."

"Hush!" exclaimed the beau. "Some one may overhear us. I would have carried her off to-night, if I had known she would have been here. Your ladyship ought to be obliged to me for the trouble I am taking. I shall remove your rival, and you will then have young Crew entirely to yourself. And now to put Sir Norfolk on his guard."

With this, he passed on to the Welah baronet, and addressed him. The latter bowed stiffly in return, and approached nearer the dancers; and while Hilda was curtseying to her partner at the close of the minuet, he took her hand and led her away. The young man would have followed them, but Cordwell Firebras came up, and arrested him.

"It won't do," he said; "Villiers has told the old baronet who you are. I must go after him instantly, and make some excuse for my share in the matter, or I shall have to cross swords with him to-morrow morning. I have done all I can for you. Good-night."

Soon after this, Randolph quitted the masquerade with Trussell. With some difficulty a boat was procured to convey them home. Finding his nephew in no mood for conversation, Trussell, who was rather tired, and moreover had drunk a good deal of

punch and champagne, disposed himself to slumber, nor did he awake till they reached Lambeth Stairs. Another boat had just landed, and two persons in dominos marched before them in the very direction they were going.

"Why, who the deuce have we here?" cried Trussell, running forward to overtake the party in advance. "Zounds, brother, is it you? Have you been at the masquerade?"

"I have," replied Abel; "and I have seen all that has occurred there."

IX

*Jacob brings a Piece of Intelligence to Randolph—
Trussell and Randolph go to Drury Lane.*

ABOUT a week after this, as Randolph was dressing himself one morning, Mr. Jukes entered his room, and informed him that the miser's servant, Jacob Post, wished to speak to him.

"He is at the door," added the butler mysteriously—"he seems very anxious to see you, so I brought him upstairs."

"Quite right, Jukes," replied Randolph—"let him come in, by all means."

"I don't know that it is quite right, sir," replied Mr. Jukes, smiling. "I fear my master may be angry with me for admitting him; but I didn't like to disoblige you."

"Very kind of you, indeed, Jukes," replied

Randulph. "My uncle shall know nothing about the matter from me. But let Jacob come in." The good-natured butler then retired, and the next moment the porter entered the room, scratching his head, as was his wont when in any way embarrassed. "Well, Jacob," said Randulph, extending his hand to him, "I'm glad to see you. Sit down."

"No, I thank'ee, sir," replied Jacob, "I'd rather stand. My business won't allow of sittin'."

"Then begin upon it at once," rejoined Randulph

"Before I begin," said Jacob, making himself up for a speech, "I must premise that I'm come on my own accord, and at nobody else's request whatsom-ever, least of all by desire of Miss Hilda——"

"I'm perfectly satisfied of it, Jacob," interrupted Randulph—"perfectly."

"Then you quite understand I'm come here without her knowledge or previtty?" said Jacob.

"Quite so," replied Randulph. "I'm quite sure she did not send you."

"No, that she didn't," rejoined Jacob; "and mortal angry she'd be with me if she thought I had come. But I see you're impatient, and I'll keep you no longer in suspense. I'm come, then, to tell you that my young missis is going to Wauxhall to-night."

"A thousand thanks for the information, Jacob!" cried Randulph, taking a crown from his purse which lay on the table. "Drink my health."

"I'd rather not take the money—much obleeged to you all the same, sir," replied Jacob. "But, as I was sayin', my young missis is goin' to Wauxhall

with Sir Norfolk Salusbury, and they're to join Lady Drabbyson and Mr. Willars. Now I've no great opinion of those two fine folks. Indeed, I suspect they're contriving some wicked design against Miss Hilda. But it's no use warnin' my master, for he wilfully shuts his eyes to danger; and as to Sir Norfolk, he's too much wrapped up in hisself, and too proud to listen to me. I therefore thought it better to come to you."

"What do you suspect, Jacob?" asked Randolph.

"Why, it's no matter what I suspect just now," replied the porter—"but I'm on a scent, and I'll find it out before night. Have you heard o' the attempt to carry off young missis?"

"No!" replied Randolph—"but you surely don't suspect Mr. Villiers of it?"

"It mayn't be safe to speak out," replied Jacob, "especially as I can't bring proof. But I could almost undertake to swear that his walet, Mr. Cripps, was one of the parties engaged in it."

"The rascal is capable of anything!" cried Randolph. "Satisfy me that Mr. Villiers was the author of the atrocious attempt you have mentioned, and he shall pay for his villainy with his life."

"Wait till to-night, sir," replied Jacob; "I may be able to satisfy you then. I'm on the look-out."

"I have my own reasons for thinking some design is on foot," replied Randolph, "because Lady Brabazon has sent me and my uncle tickets for Drury Lane to-night; regretting she could not go there herself, but omitting to mention a word about Vauxhall."

"She wanted to get you out o' the way," returned Jacob. "It's a deep laid scheme. But I'll unravel it. Don't let any one—not even your uncle, Mr. Trussell, know where you're goin' to-night. You can watch what's done, and act accordingly. I'll be there, and let you know what I've learnt in the meantime."

"I entirely approve of your advice," rejoined Randolph, "and will act in accordance with it. But how will you see me there?"

"Be under the orchyster at ten o'clock, and I'll find means o' comin' to you," replied Jacob. "And now my time's up. You'll be cautious?"

"Fear me not," replied Randolph.

And Jacob took his departure.

Acting upon the porter's suggestion, Randolph said nothing to his uncles of what had passed; nor did Mr. Jukes mention a word of Jacob's visit, so that neither of them had any idea of the cause of his abstraction, though both remarked it. He spent the greater part of the morning in his own room, in order to indulge his thoughts unrestrainedly, and only came downstairs to dinner when he was perfectly composed.

Abel was graver than usual, but Trussell was in his usual flow of spirits, and talked of the performances they were about to witness.

"We are going to see the 'Beau's Stratagem,' sir," he said to his brother; "and as Mr. Garrick is to play Archer, and Mr. Macklin, Scrub, we cannot fail of being well entertained."

"Humph!" exclaimed Abel.

"Then as to ladies," added Trussell, turning to Randolph, "we are to have the charming Mrs. Cibber, and the scarcely less charming Mrs. Woffington; and the critics tell me that the new opera—the 'Temple of Dulness'—is to be delightful."

"No wonder critics say so," observed Abel, with a sneer; "the title alone would make it attractive to them."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Trussell. "By-the-bye," he added aside to Randolph, "your friend Kitty Conway sings at Vauxhall to-night."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Randolph.

"I'm surprised you don't go to hear her," said Abel, who had overheard the remark, looking so hard at him that he was covered with confusion.

"He's otherwise engaged," interrupted Trussell. "I only heard of it this morning by accident. We'll go to Vauxhall if you prefer it to Drury Lane, Randolph."

"No, don't alter your arrangements!" cried Randolph hastily.

"Sir Singleton Spinke will be there, I'll be sworn," laughed Trussell—"though he's got a new flame; the daughter of a mercer named Deacle, who lives in the Little Sanctuary, just opposite—but never mind where she lives," he added, observing his brother frowned—"she's a devilish pretty girl, and is called, on account of her beauty, the fair Thomasine. You saw her at the masquerade at Ranelagh the other night. She was one of the columbines who danced with Mr. Cripps."

"I noticed her," observed Abel—"a silly coquette!"

"I'll tell you a capital joke about Sir Singleton and this fair damsel," pursued Trussell, laughing. "You must know that he supped with her and her party the other night at Ranelagh, and got so drunk that he was left under the table in the alcove. While he was in this state, some one, most probably Mr. Cripps, cut off his long queue, and sent it the next morning in a packet to the fair Thomasine, accompanied by a tender epistle, offering her his hand, and begging, as he could not send a lock of his hair, to enclose instead—his pigtail!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Jukes, who was in attendance. "Just like one of Crackenthorpe's tricks—just like him."

This story forced a smile even from Abel, and the rest of the dinner passed off agreeably enough. The cloth was removed, and the wine placed upon the table, but Randolph scarcely tasted it, and Trussell, after swallowing a few glasses, said it was time to start for the play.

"Before you go, I have a word to say to you, Randolph," remarked Abel, in a tone that alarmed the young man. "I have made no comments upon your dissipated course of life of late, because I felt it would be thrown away; but it must now be ended."

"I am at a loss to know, sir, what particular part of my conduct has displeased you," said Randolph.

"I speak of your conduct generally, not particularly," rejoined Abel severely. "But there will be one here to-morrow who has a better title to admonish you than I have."

"Your words would seem to refer to my mother, sir," said Randolph, in great surprise. "Is she coming to town?"

"She will be here to-morrow," replied Abel. "But you are detaining your uncle Trussell—he is impatient. Go. It is your last night; make the most of it."

Trussell was as much surprised as Randolph at what had just passed, but he made no remark till they got out of the house.

"Well, I shall be delighted to see my sister Crew," he said—"delighted to see her. But I wonder why the old gentleman made a secret of her coming. Don't be apprehensive of any lectures from her, Randolph. I'll set it all right, depend upon it."

"It is strange she shouldn't have written to me on the subject," said Randolph.

"Most likely my brother imposed secrecy upon her," replied Trussell. "However, we must have a little talk together before her arrival. I must counsel you how to act at this juncture. She's an excellent creature, your mother. But it'll never do to be tied to the apron-string. Let us forget the matter now, and, adopting the old gentleman's advice, make the most of to-night."

A boat conveyed them to Somerset Stairs, where they landed, and proceeded to Drury Lane Theatre. Randolph had resolved upon what course to pursue. The play was admirably performed; but even the inimitable acting of Garrick and Macklin failed to interest him, so much was he preoccupied. The

comedy over, they adjourned to Tom's Coffee-house, in Covent Garden, where abundance of company were assembled, plentifully besprinkled with blue and green ribands and stars. Trussell met a host of acquaintances, and framing a hasty excuse, Randolph left him with them, and hurrying to Salisbury Stairs, took a boat, and ordered the waterman to row to Vauxhall.

X

The Supper at Vauxhall—Beau Villiers' Attempt to carry off Hilda defeated by Randolph.

CELEBRATED throughout Europe, and once esteemed the most delightful place of recreation of the kind, Vauxhall Gardens have been in existence more than a century; and it rejoices us to find that they are not altogether closed. They were first opened with a ridotto al fresco, about the year 1730, and speedily rising to a high reputation, were enlarged and laid out in the most superb manner.

A magnificent orchestra, of Gothic form, ornamented with carving and niches, and provided with a fine organ, was erected in the midst of the garden. There was likewise a rotunda, though not of equal dimensions with that of Ranelagh, being only seventy feet in diameter, with a dome-like roof, supported by four handsome Ionic columns, embellished with foliage at the base, while the shafts were wreathed with a Gothic balustrade, represent-

ing climbing figures. From the centre depended a magnificent chandelier.

A part of the rotunda, used as a saloon, was decorated with columns, between which were paintings by Hayman. The entrance from the gardens was through a Gothic portal. Moreover, there were pavilions or alcoves, ornamented with paintings from designs by Hogarth and Hayman, appropriate to the place ; each alcove having a table in it capable of accommodating six or eight persons, and leading in an extensive sweep to a magnificent piazza, five hundred feet in length, of Chinese architecture. This semicircle led to a further sweep of pavilions.

A noble gravel walk, nine hundred feet in length, bordered with lofty trees, and terminated by a broad lawn, in which there was a Gothic obelisk, faced the entrance. But the enchantment of the gardens commenced with the moment of their illumination, when upwards of two thousand lamps, lighted almost simultaneously, glimmered through the green leaves of the trees, and shed their radiance on the fairy scene around. This was the grand charm of Vauxhall. One of its minor attractions was a curious piece of machinery representing a miller's house, a water-wheel, and a cascade, which, at that period of the art, was thought quite marvellous. There were numberless walks and wildernesses in the grounds, and most of the vistas were adorned with statues. In one of them, at a date a little posterior to this history, was a statue of Handel as Orpheus holding a lyre.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Randolph reached the gardens. He proceeded along the grand walk, which was brilliantly illuminated, and filled with company, as far as the obelisk, but he could see nothing of Sir Norfolk or Hilda.

He then turned into one of the side walks, and approached the orchestra, in front of which stood Kitty Conway, preparing to sing. She instantly detected him, and made a slight movement of recognition. As he passed the range of alcoves beneath the orchestra, he perceived Jacob, who instantly came towards him.

"I've found it all out," said the porter—"I knew I should. Mr. Willars is the contriver of the plot. He means to carry off Miss Hilda, and has engaged a coach for that purpose, which is stationed at the back o' the gardens. Luckily, the coachman is a friend o' mine, and it's through him I've detected the scheme."

"But where is your mistress?" cried Randolph.

"There," replied Jacob, pointing to a party seated at supper beneath the grove of trees in front of the orchestra.

"I see," replied Randolph. "By Heaven!" he cried, "Mr. Villiers is coming this way. Two persons stop him. As I live, one of them is his valet, and the other Captain Culpepper, a fellow whom my uncle Trussell told me was a sort of bravo, and would cut any man's throat for hire. Doubtless they are planning the abduction."

"You may take your oath of it," replied Jacob. "I'll manage to get near 'em unobserved. Come

back to this place when they separate, and you shall know all."

So saying, he slouched his hat over his eyes, and mingling with the crowd, got within ear-shot of the beau, who, as has been intimated, was addressing Captain Culpepper and Mr. Cripps.

Randulph, meanwhile, felt irresistibly drawn towards the table where Hilda was seated, and as he kept behind the trees, he was not noticed by the party, though he *was* noticed by Kitty Conway, from the orchestra, who, guessing his intention, was so much agitated, that, for the first time in her professional career, she made some false notes in her singing. Hilda's seat was placed against a tree. On her right was Sir Norfolk Salusbury; and on the right of the baronet, Lady Brabazon; next her ladyship was a vacant chair—no doubt just quitted by Beau Villiers; then came Lady Fazakerly; then Sir Bulkeley Price; and lastly, Clementina Brabazon, who occupied the seat on the left of the miser's daughter.

Partly screened by the tree against which Hilda was seated, Randulph bent forward, and breathed her name in the gentlest accents. Hilda heard the whisper, and looking round, beheld the speaker. How much may be conveyed in a glance! She read the intensity of his passion and the depth of his devotion in his eyes, and for the first time returned his gaze with a look of kindness, almost of tenderness. Randulph was transported; he could not resist the impulse that prompted him to advance and take her hand, which she unresistingly yielded

The Supper at Vauxhall.







W. H. Stiles del.

100

to him. All this was the work of a minute; but the action had not been unobserved, either by Kitty Conway or Lady Brabazon. Both had felt a similar pang of jealousy; but revenge instantly occurred to the latter. While Randolph was in the act of raising Hilda's hand to his lips, she touched Sir Norfolk's arm, and, pointing in the direction of the lovers, whispered, "Look there!"

Sir Norfolk arose, and in a stern and peremptory voice, said to the young man, "Set free that lady's hand, sir!"

"Not unless she chooses to withdraw it," replied Randolph.

"I am wholly to blame for this, Sir Norfolk," said Hilda, withdrawing her hand, and blushing deeply.

"You are pleased to say so, Miss Scarve," returned Sir Norfolk; "but the young man has been guilty of a great indecorum, and I shall call him to a strict account for it."

"I shall be ready to answer the call whenever you please, Sir Norfolk," rejoined Randolph. "But this is not the place for menaces. You will do well to look after your charge."

"I shall take care to keep off impertinents like you," replied Sir Norfolk.

"Better guard her against other dangers, which require more penetration than you care to practise," retorted Randolph.

"I have only one answer to make to such insolence," said Sir Norfolk, "and that shall be given to-morrow. You shall hear from me, Mr. Crew."

"As soon as you please, Sir Norfolk," replied Randolph.

"For my sake, Mr. Crew," interposed Hilda, "let this quarrel go no further. I have been the innocent cause of it. Promise me it shall not."

"I would willingly obey you in anything, Miss Scarve," replied Randolph; "but in this case it is not in my power. Farewell!" Fixing one passionate look upon her, he then bowed haughtily to Sir Norfolk, who returned his salutation in kind, and withdrew.

As he walked away, he encountered Beau Villiers, who was returning from his conference. Villiers started on seeing him, but instantly recovered himself, and would have addressed him, but Randolph turned abruptly away.

"What the devil has brought Randolph Crew here?" said Villiers to Sir Singleton, as he joined the party. "I thought he was at Drury Lane."

"Devil knows!" cried the old beau. "But he has made a pretty scene." And he proceeded to relate what had occurred. Villiers laughed heartily at the recital.

"I hope old Salusbury will cut his throat," he said, in an undertone.

"Why, it would be desirable to get him out of the way, certainly," replied the old beau. "The women are all mad about him."

"Especially Kitty Conway," observed Villiers. "Odds life! this accounts for her having fainted in the orchestra. I wondered what could be the matter with her, but now I understand it. All is

prepared," he added, in a deep whisper to Lady Brabazon.

"Be careful how you act," she replied, in a low tone. "You'll find Sir Norfolk dangerous, and Randolph Crew is on the watch."

"Fear nothing," he rejoined, "I've taken my measures securely. Make towards the dark walk, and contrive to lead him and the others away."

Lady Brabazon nodded. Soon after this she arose, and, without ceremony, took Sir Norfolk's arm, while Villiers very gallantly offered his to Hilda. The rest of the party paired off in like manner. Leading the way in the direction agreed upon, Lady Brabazon expressed a desire to view the scenic representation of the mill and waterfall before mentioned, which was exhibited in a hollow of the great walk; and they proceeded towards it. Hilda was much displeased by the assiduities of her companion, and she could not help remarking that he contrived, on various pretences, to linger behind the rest of the party, and though she repeatedly urged him to rejoin them, he always made some excuse for not doing so. At last, on pausing longer than usual, they quite lost sight of them, and were hurrying forward at Hilda's urgent request, when, as they passed one of the side vistas, Mr. Cripps, who was standing at the end of it, advanced towards his master.

"Fortunately encountered, sir," said the valet, bowing. "Lady Brabazon sent me to look for you, to tell you that she and the party are gone down a walk on the left to see a fine painting in the

Chinese pavilion at the end of it. With your permission, I'll show you the way."

"Oh yes, let us go to them, by all means," said Hilda unsuspectingly.

"Lead on, then!" cried the beau, scarcely able to conceal his satisfaction at the success of the scheme.

A few steps brought them to the end of a narrow walk, arched over by trees, the branches of which were so thickly interlaced that the moonlight could not penetrate through them. Alarmed by its appearance, Hilda drew back. "How thoughtless of Sir Norfolk to leave me thus!" she exclaimed.

"Why, you are surely not afraid of accompanying me down this walk, Miss Scarve," laughed the beau. "My valet is with us, and shall protect you. The Chinese pavilion is not more than a hundred yards off; and the walk, though dark, is not solitary."

Fancying she perceived some persons within it, Hilda suffered herself to be led on; but she had not advanced many steps when all her uneasiness returned, and she bitterly regretted having assented. But it was too late. The beau's grasp had tightened upon her arm, and he drew her quickly forward, while Mr. Cripps proceeded at the same rapid pace. Once or twice, she thought she heard footsteps behind her, and almost fancied she could distinguish a figure walking near them, but she did not dare to express her terrors.

They had proceeded, so far as she could judge, about a hundred yards, when a sudden turn in the

walk disclosed a low hedge; beyond was the open country bathed in moonlight. Coming to a sudden halt, the beau said, in a hurried but imperative tone—

“Miss Scarve, I love you to desperation, and am determined to make you mine. You are now in my power, and must accompany me.”

“Never,” replied Hilda resolutely. “And I command you to release me.” She would have screamed for help, if Villiers, who had grasped her more tightly, had not taken out his handkerchief, and, placing it over her mouth, prevented her cries. While this was passing, Captain Culpepper emerged from the trees, and hastened with Mr. Cripps towards him.

“Bravo, sir,” cried the captain. “All goes well this time. We’ll have her in the coach in a twinkling.”

“Not so fast, villains!” thundered Randolph, rushing forward. “I have allowed you to go thus far to see to what lengths your villainy would carry you. But you shall pay dearly for it.”

As he spoke, he rushed to the beau, and snatching Hilda from him, dashed him backwards with such force that he fell upon the ground. Another person likewise came to the rescue. This was Jacob, who, brandishing his cudgel, hurried to the scene of action. On seeing him the valet whipped out his blade, but it was beaten from his grasp, and he only avoided a terrible blow from the cudgel by a nimble leap aside. Without waiting for a second blow, he plunged into the wood, and made his escape.

Captain Culpepper fared no better. Before he could draw his sword, he received a blow on the head that stretched him senseless and bleeding on the ground. Hilda, meantime, had murmured her thanks to her deliverer, who felt, as he pressed her to his bosom, that the whole of his previous anxiety was more than repaid by the unutterable joy of the moment.

"Hilda!" he cried passionately, "I would risk a thousand lives for you. Forgive me if, at this moment, I dare to ask if I may hope?"

She murmured a faint response in the affirmative.

"I am the happiest of men!" cried Randolph, transported with delight.

"Alas!" exclaimed Hilda, "my avowal can give you little happiness. I can never be yours."

"There you speak truth!" cried Villiers, who by this time had regained his feet, and furiously approached them. "You never shall be his."

"This is the leader of the gang!" cried Jacob, who, having just disposed of Captain Culpepper, now rushed towards the beau, brandishing his cudgel in a formidable manner. "I'll soon settle him."

"Leave him alone, Jacob," cried Randolph authoritatively; "his punishment belongs to me."

"You're wrong, sir," rejoined Jacob, "but I shan't disobey you. He doesn't deserve to be treated like a gen'l'man."

"Oblige me by stepping aside for a moment, Mr. Crew!" said the beau, with forced politeness. And, as Randolph complied, he added, "I shall expect satisfaction for the injury you have done me."

"I might well refuse it," replied Randolph ; "but I am too eager for vengeance myself to do so. You shall have the satisfaction you seek as soon as you please."

"To-morrow morning, then, at the earliest hour—at five—in Tothill Fields," said Villiers.

"I will be there," replied Randolph. And, quitting the beau, he rejoined Hilda, to whom he offered his arm. They walked down the avenue together, Jacob following close beside them. Hilda allowed her hand to remain in his, while he poured the warmest protestations of attachment into her ear. She did not attempt to check him ; and perhaps it would be difficult to say which of the two felt the most regret when that brief dream of happiness was ended, as they emerged into the lighted vista.

Almost immediately on entering the great walk, they met Sir Norfolk and Lady Brabazon and the rest of the party. Her ladyship was at first greatly confused at seeing Randolph, but she instantly guessed what had happened, and tried to put a good face on the matter. Advancing to Hilda, she hastily inquired what had happened ; but the latter turned coldly from her, and taking the arm of Sir Norfolk Salisbury, desired to be led home.

"Your ladyship is perfectly aware of the peril in which I have been placed," she said. "But I have been delivered from it by the courage and address of Mr. Crew."

"Before you go, Miss Scarve," said Lady Brabazon, "I beseech you to give me some explanation of what has happened."

"It must suffice, then, to say that Mr. Villiers has attempted to carry me off," replied Hilda—"but his purpose has been defeated."

"What is this I hear?" cried Sir Norfolk. "Mr. Villiers guilty of so base an attempt? I will go in search of him instantly!"

"I have undertaken the punishment of Mr. Villiers' offence, sir," said Randolph.

"You have an account to settle with me yourself, sir," rejoined Sir Norfolk sternly.

"I will settle it at five o'clock to-morrow morning, in Tothill Fields," replied Randolph, in a low tone, "after I have arranged with Mr. Villiers."

"Be it so," replied Sir Norfolk. And he strode off with Hilda, followed by Jacob; while Randolph, without staying to exchange a word with Lady Brabazon, walked away in the opposite direction.

XI

Randolph worsts Beau Villiers in a Duel in Tothill Fields, and is worsted himself in a Second Duel by Sir Norfolk Salisbury.

ON quitting Vauxhall, Randolph made the best of his way home, agitated by a crowd of tumultuous thoughts. Abel had retired to rest more than an hour ago, but Trussell was not yet come home. Telling Mr. Jukes, therefore, that he must see his younger uncle directly, he set off again without a moment's delay, and taking a boat at Lambeth

Stairs, rowed to the nearest point to Covent Garden. He then hurried to Tom's Coffee-house, where he found his uncle at supper in a box by himself, and proceeded to relate to him all that had occurred.

"A pretty adventure!" exclaimed Trussell, at the close of the recital. "An abduction prevented, and a couple of duels! I'm sorry I wasn't with you, that I might have taken one of the latter off your hands. It'll be a mortal conflict with the beau. I'm glad you've had lessons from Hewitt. He told me himself, not many days ago, that you were one of his best scholars, and had as strong a wrist and as quick an eye as any man he knew."

"I've no fear of the result in either case," replied Randolph.

"I'm glad you're so confident," said Trussell; "but neither of your antagonists are to be despised. Take a glass of punch—they brew famously here—well, as you please. We must make arrangements instanter. Our best plan will be to go to Hewitt, and tell him to be in the field with swords and a surgeon at the appointed hour."

Emptying the rummer of punch before him, he called to the drawer, paid him, and taking his nephew's arm, they set forth. Mr. Hewitt lived in Leicester Street, Leicester Fields—now Leicester Square. He was in bed; but they soon knocked him up, and, explaining their business, he entered upon it immediately.

"I will be sure to be on the ground at the time appointed, and will bring Mr. Molson, the surgeon, with me," said Hewitt. "He will take care of you

in case of accident. But I don't apprehend any such to you, because I know what you can do. You shall have my favourite German blade—here it is," he added, taking down a sword. "This is the strongest and lightest sword I ever handled, and equal to any Spanish tuck. Be sure you come coolly into the field. The best swordsman that ever fought will be worsted if he is in a passion. You'll need judgment as well as skill to-morrow, and take care you do not disorder it in any way. Mr. Villiers is a very skilful fencer, but he is likely enough to be in a passion. As to Sir Norfolk, you will find him calm as death. He is a far more dangerous adversary than the other."

"Far more dangerous," echoed Trussell.

"Sir Norfolk being so much taller than yourself," pursued the fencing-master, "the best way when you intend to make a thrust at him will be to come to half sword, you will then be within distance. If you act on the defensive, engage only five inches, and keep him at that distance. You understand?"

"Perfectly," replied Randulph.

"The best thrust you can make at him will be seconde, or carte under the shell, or you may dart your sword as I have taught you. And now I recommend you to go to rest. Think no more of the duel, but sleep soundly, and come to the field as fresh as a lark."

Randulph smiled at the fencing-master's advice, and having arranged a meeting at the Horseferry, Westminster, opposite Lambeth Stairs, at half-past four o'clock, he took his departure with his uncle.

They reached home in about half-an-hour, and Mr. Jukes expressed great delight at seeing them. It had been previously agreed, for fear of mistake, that Trussell should sit up all night, and call his nephew in sufficient time in the morning, and he therefore ordered Mr. Jukes to bring him a bottle of brandy and a large jug of cold water. The butler obeyed, and took the opportunity of inquiring whether anything was the matter, but received no direct answer.

On retiring to his own room, Randolph threw himself into a chair, and turned over the events of the day. Amid a multitude of dark and disagreeable thoughts, there was one that was bright and cheering. He had seen Hilda—avowed his passion—and received an assurance that he was not indifferent to her. This thought buoyed him up, and made him regard with indifference the danger to which he was exposed. His most painful reflections were connected with his mother, and knowing the anguish she would experience if anything should happen to him, he sat down and wrote a letter, full of filial affection and tenderness, to be delivered to her in case of his fall. This done, he threw himself on his couch, but his mind was too much disturbed to allow him to sleep.

Long before it was light, he arose and dressed himself, and when Trussell entered the room, he was on his knees at the bedside, at prayer. On rising, he gave the letter he had written to the charge of his uncle, and they crept downstairs as softly as they could, for fear of disturbing any one in the house. They then proceeded to the dining-

room, where Trussell swallowed a glass of brandy to keep the cold out of his stomach, and recommended his nephew to do the same to steady his hand; but the latter, doubting the efficacy of the prescription, declined it. Their hope of getting away proved fallacious, for, as they entered the hall on their way to the outer door, they found Abel standing there, wrapped in his dressing-gown.

"Randulph," he said, eyeing his nephew severely—"you are going to fight a duel. It is useless to deny it. I am sure you are."

"I shall not attempt to deny it, sir," replied Randulph. "I am."

"He is going to fight two duels, brother," said Trussell, emboldened by the brandy he had just swallowed.

"Two duels!" echoed Abel—"then he is doubly foolish—doubly culpable. Randulph, you are about to commit a very sinful and very foolish action; and though you may be justified in what you do by the laws of honour, and the usages of society, you will not be justified before Heaven."

"Really, my dear sir," said Trussell, "you view this matter much too seriously."

"Not a whit," replied Abel; "Randulph might stop if he would. But he would rather run the risk of offending his Maker than man."

"Uncle," said Randulph, "I cannot now argue with you; but I have good reasons for what I am about to do."

"No reason can warrant bloodshed," said Abel sternly. "Since you are deaf to my counsels, go.

Yet think what a blow it will be to your mother, if she finds on her arrival that she has lost her son."

"I *have* thought of that, uncle," replied Randolph; "and I have left a letter with my uncle Trussell. Perhaps you will now permit me to commit its charge to you?"

"Here it is, sir," said Trussell, handing him the letter. "Time presses. We must be gone. We hope to be back again with you at breakfast, and to make a hearty and merry meal. We are quite sorry to have disturbed you. Good morning, sir."

Abel threw a severe and disgusted look at him, and then turning to Randolph, pressed his hand affectionately, and said, "I hope I *may* see you at breakfast, and with no blood on your soul." And with these words he walked away.

"Devilish unlucky we should meet him!" said Trussell, forcing a laugh, as they quitted the house. "I suppose Jukes must have suspected something, and called him up, for I don't think he could have overheard us."

Randolph made no reply, for Abel's parting speech had sunk deep into his breast, and they proceeded in silence towards the Palace Stairs.

It was a fresh and beautiful morning, though the sun was scarcely risen, and a thin silvery mist hung like a veil over the smooth surface of the water. Two or three watermen were lying asleep in their tilts, and they roused one of them, who speedily rowed them to the opposite bank, near which they found Mr. Hewitt, with two brace of swords under his arm, in addition to the one by his side, accom-

panied by a tall stout man, with a red face, dressed in a well-powdered wig, and a suit of purple velvet, and carrying a gold-headed cane, who was introduced as Mr. Molson, the surgeon.

"You look famously," said the fencing-master to Randolph. "Follow my instructions, and you're sure to come off victoriously."

The party then walked along the Horseferry Road, which speedily brought them to Tothill Fields. They were the first on the ground, and Mr. Hewitt, after looking about for a short time, discovered a spot excellently adapted for the encounters. By this time, the sun having risen, the morning's early promise of beauty was fully confirmed.

The spot selected for the combats commanded a fine view of Westminster Abbey, which reared its massive body and tall towers above a range of mean habitations masking its base. Cawing jackdaws in clouds wheeled in the sunny air above its pinnacles. A calmer or more beautiful scene could not be imagined. Randolph's reflections were interrupted by the approach of two persons from the left of the fields, who proved to be Sir Norfolk Salusbury and Cordwell Firebras. Sir Norfolk bowed stiffly to Randolph, and also to Trussell, and seeing that the beau was not arrived, said to the former, "As I am first in the field, I am entitled to the first bout."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you, Sir Norfolk," replied Randolph; "but I *must* give Mr. Villiers priority."

"Well, as you please, sir," said the baronet, walking aside.

Cordwell Firebras then advanced to Randolph.

"I am here as Sir Norfolk's second," he said; "but I hope the matter may only serve as a little breathing for you before breakfast. It is an idle quarrel. We must talk about Villiers' attempt anon. But here he is."

As he spoke, two chairs were seen approaching from the lower end of the fields. When they came within a hundred yards of the party they stopped, and from the first issued Mr. Villiers, and from the other Sir Bulkeley Price. Mr. Cripps walked by the side of his master's chair, bearing a water-bottle and a glass. The new-comers advanced slowly towards the party, and Mr. Villiers, having bowed with much haughtiness to Randolph, gracefully saluted the rest of the company.

"Have we anything to wait for, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Nothing," replied Trussell; "we are all ready."

"To business, then," rejoined the beau.

At a motion from his master, Mr. Cripps advanced towards him, and receiving his clouded cane, proceeded to divest him of his coat, leaving him on a light striped silk waistcoat, with sleeves of the same materials. Randolph meantime threw off his upper garment, and rolled up his shirt sleeve on his right arm. Mr. Hewitt then stepped up to him, and gave him the German sword he had promised; while Mr. Villiers received an exquisitely tempered blade from the valet.

These preparations made, the seconds and bystanders fell back a few paces, Trussell, Firebras, and Hewitt standing on one side, and the two baronets on the other, while the surgeon stood at a little distance in the rear with Mr. Cripps. Advancing towards each other, the combatants saluted, and in another moment their blades were crossed, and several rapid passes exchanged.

The spectators watched the conflict with the greatest interest, for both parties appeared admirably matched, and the beau's superior skill was counterbalanced by Randolph's extraordinary vigour and quickness. Thrusts were made and parried on both sides, but not a single hit was given, until Randolph, finding his adversary engaged in tierce with a high point, made a firm thrust in carte over the arm, and passed his sword through the fleshy part of the other's shoulder. At this successful hit, the seconds rushed forward, but before they reached the spot, the beau's sword fell from his grasp.

"It is nothing," said Villiers, surrendering himself to the surgeon, who likewise hurried towards him; "but I acknowledge myself defeated."

While the beau's wound was bound up by the surgeon, and he was led to the chair by Mr. Cripps, Sir Norfolk Salusbury, who had been a watchful spectator of the conflict, stepped forward, and said to Randolph—

"Whatever may be the issue of our encounter, Mr. Crew, I shall declare that in the combat which has just taken place, you have conducted yourself like a man of honour and spirit."

"I am glad to receive the acknowledgment from you, Sir Norfolk," replied Randolph, bowing.

"Pray do not hurry yourself on my account," said the baronet courteously.

"I am quite ready for you," replied Randolph. "What I have gone through has only served to steady my nerves."

With the assistance of Firebras, who had come over to him, Sir Norfolk then took off his coat, waistcoat, and shirt, and in this state presented so extraordinary an appearance, that Randolph could scarcely repress a smile. The punctilious old knight's first step was to deliver his sword to Mr. Hewitt, who, on measuring it with that of Randolph, found that it exceeded the latter in length by two inches. He therefore gave him one of his own swords, and Sir Norfolk, beating an appeal with his right foot, bade his youthful opponent come on. Having gone through their salutes with the greatest formality, they commenced the combat with the utmost caution.

Sir Norfolk acted chiefly upon the defensive, and contented himself almost entirely with parrying the thrusts aimed at him. Randolph soon found that he had a formidable antagonist to deal with, and altering his plan, tried to compel him to attack him. He made several feints with great dexterity, and just touched his adversary's breast with an inside thrust in *carte*, causing a slight effusion of blood.

This had the effect of rousing the old baronet into exertion, and in his turn he became the assailant. He attacked Randolph with such force and

fury, that he drove him back several paces. The young man returned to the charge, and pressed his adversary in his turn, so that he regained his ground; but while making a pass in carte, his sword was turned near the wrist by a dexterous and sudden lunge on the part of the baronet, whose point entered his side just below the elbow, and inflicted a severe wound. Maddened by the pain, Randolph continued to fight desperately, but the seconds rushed between the combatants, and interposing their blades, declared that the strife must terminate, and that Sir Norfolk was the victor. The baronet immediately dropped his sword, and Randolph, whose strength had been fast failing, fell to the ground insensible.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

BOOK THE THIRD

ABEL BEEHCROFT

I

What became of Randolph after the Duel—How Hilda received the Intelligence that Randolph had been wounded in the Duel ; and what passed between Cordwell Firebras and the Miser.

ASSISTANCE was promptly afforded Randolph, after his fall, by the surgeon. Placed in Sir Bulkeley Price's chair, he was removed to the nearest tavern in the Horseferry Road, where his wound was dressed. Sir Norfolk Salusbury, who expressed great concern about him, followed him thither as soon as he had bound up his wound, and put on his habiliments, and appeared greatly relieved when the surgeon gave him his positive assurance that no danger whatever was to be apprehended.

"Is that Sir Norfolk Salusbury?" asked Randolph in a faint voice.

"It is," replied the baronet, stepping forward.

"Our quarrel is now at an end, I trust?" said the young man, extending his hand, which the other grasped cordially.

"In toto," replied Sir Norfolk ; "and not merely is it at an end, but a friendship, I hope, has commenced between us from this date."

"I shall hold it cheaply purchased on my part, if it proves so," replied Randolph, smiling gratefully.

"My first business shall be to call on Hilda Scarve to tell her how bravely you have combated in her defence," said Sir Norfolk.

"You will for ever oblige me," replied the young man, trying to raise himself, but sinking back the next moment, exhausted by the effort.

"I must interdict further conversation, gentlemen," interposed the surgeon ; "the bleeding has recommenced, and the pulse has risen. If I am left alone with my patient for a few hours, I will answer for his doing well, but not otherwise."

The room was then cleared, and Sir Norfolk invited the others to breakfast with him at his lodgings in Abingdon Street ; and Trussell, finding that his attendance was not required, but that he was rather in the way than otherwise, accepted the invitation.

Everything belonging to Sir Norfolk was as formal as himself. He had an old servant, the stiffest and tallest of his class, who moved like an automaton worked by rusty springs. Moreover, he had a favourite greyhound, who would allow no one to caress him but his master ; and a peacock, his especial favourite, which used to strut backwards and forwards with him for hours together in a little garden at the back of the house. Inhospitality formed no part of the worthy old baronet's character,

and a very plentiful repast was set before his guests. Despising tea and coffee as effeminate and enervating beverages, he nevertheless offered them to his guests, but they were declined by all, and the light claret substituted greatly preferred. A few bottles of this pleasant drink served to wash down the broiled salmon, the slices of mutton-ham, the rump-steaks, the kidneys, and anchovy toasts, with which the board was spread. A cold sirloin of beef, and a veal and ham pasty, flanked by a tankard of stout Welsh ale, stood on the sideboard, and to these Sir Bulkeley Price applied himself, and declared he had not made so good a breakfast since he arrived in town.

"Your early rising has given you an appetite, Sir Bulkeley," said the elder baronet.

"Perhaps so," replied the other, again applying to the tankard; "but your ale is excellent—quite equal to my own. I wish I had sent some up from Flint."

Aqua vitæ in small glasses was then handed round, and partaken of by all except the host. After this, the party broke up, Trussell setting out to see how his nephew went on, and Sir Norfolk and Firebras proceeding to the Little Sanctuary, to call on the miser. Not having seen his daughter over night, for he did not wait up for her, Mr. Scarve only became acquainted with the beau's attempt to carry her off on the following morning. The relation of the matter exasperated him in the highest degree, and when Sir Norfolk Salusbury and Firebras were ushered in by Jacob, they found him in a state of great excitement. Without allowing the baronet time to utter a word, he rushed up to him,

and, in a voice half choked by fury, exclaimed, "Have you killed him?—have you killed him?"

"Do you allude to Mr. Randolph Crew, sir?" demanded Sir Norfolk calmly.

"No, to the beau—to Villiers!" rejoined the miser.

"I have not engaged with him," replied the old bachelor; "but he has met with due chastisement from Mr. Crew."

"I am glad to hear it," rejoined the miser; "but I should have been better pleased if his villainy had been punished by any other person. You, yourself, are in some measure to blame for this misadventure, Sir Norfolk."

"I can make due allowance for your excited feelings, Mr. Scarve," returned the baronet; "but——"

"Sdeath, sir!" interrupted the miser; "why did you let Hilda out of your sight? Since you undertook the charge of her, it was your duty to keep strict watch over her."

"I feel there is reason in what you say, Mr. Scarve," replied Sir Norfolk; "nevertheless——"

"I want no explanation," cried the miser fiercely. "It is sufficient for me that the thing has happened; and look how it stands. My daughter is entrusted to your care—is all but carried off by a libertine, from under your very nose—and is rescued by the very person of all others I wished her to avoid, and against whom I cautioned you. Can anything be imagined more vexatious?"

"It is as vexatious to me as it can be to yourself, Mr. Scarve," replied Sir Norfolk sternly, for his for-

bearance was fast waning; "but I must beg of you to use more moderation in your tones and language. Recollect whom you are addressing."

"I ought to have recollected your blind and stupid punctiliousness, which so easily makes you the dupe of designers, before I committed my daughter to your charge," cried the miser, provoked by the other's haughtiness.

"Whew!" exclaimed Firebras, with a slight whistle. "There'll be another duel presently if he goes on at this rate."

"Mr. Scarve, I wish you a good morning," said the old baronet, bowing stiffly; "you shall hear from me ere long."

"Stay, Sir Norfolk," cried Hilda, rushing up to him; "my father does not know what he says. For my sake let it pass."

"Ay, ay, Sir Norfolk, let it pass," whispered Firebras. "Mr. Scarve's intemperate conduct should move your pity rather than your anger."

"I believe you are right, sir," replied the old baronet, in the same tone; "I will regard it as a mere infirmity of temper."

"Sir Norfolk," said Hilda, speaking with forced calmness—"some menacing words passed between you and Randolph Crew last night. You say he has risked his life on my account, and has punished my assailant. I trust that nothing has passed, or may pass, between you and him? Promise me this, Sir Norfolk?"

"Sir Norfolk may safely give that promise now," remarked Firebras.

"How mean you, sir?" cried Hilda, becoming as pale as death. "Have you met him, Sir Norfolk?—have you fought?"

The old baronet averted his head.

"I will answer for him," said Firebras—"they have met."

"But nothing has happened?" cried Hilda. "Randolph is safe—is he not?"

"I did my best not to touch him," replied the old baronet reluctantly; "but he put me so hardly to it, that—that——"

"Well!" cried Hilda breathlessly.

"After receiving a scratch myself, which a plaster has cured," pursued Sir Norfolk, "I slightly wounded him."

"And this is the reward of his devotion to me!" cried Hilda.

"It is nothing—nothing whatever, Miss Scarve," rejoined Firebras; "the surgeon says he will be out again in a week."

"I am glad you hit him," said the miser; "it will teach him not to meddle where he has no concern in future."

"I was grieved to do so," replied Sir Norfolk; "but he forced me to it. I never crossed swords with a braver young man. You have formed an erroneous opinion of him, Mr. Scarve."

"I have formed no opinion of him at all," rejoined the miser.

"You are sure he is not dangerously wounded, Sir Norfolk," cried Hilda.

"Quite sure," replied the old baronet.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed. And with a gasp for utterance, she fell into the arms of her aunt, who stood close beside her, and who bore her out of the room.

"It requires no conjurer to tell how affairs stand in that quarter, Mr. Scarve," observed Cordwell Firebras.

"It is plain she loves the young man," said Sir Norfolk—"and, for my own part, I think him in every way worthy of her."

"Worthy or not, he shall never have her," returned the miser sullenly.

"It is not for me to dictate to you, Mr. Scarve," rejoined Sir Norfolk; "nor would I presume to hint the course I think you ought to pursue; but being satisfied that your daughter's affections are engaged to this young man, unless your objections to him are insuperable, I hope you will not interfere with their happiness."

"My objections to him *are* insuperable, Sir Norfolk," rejoined the miser coldly.

"I am truly sorry to hear it," replied the old baronet.

"Excuse me, Sir Norfolk," said Firebras, seeing that the other was about to take leave. "I have a few words to say to Mr. Scarve."

Sir Norfolk then bowed, quitted the room, and was ushered to the door by Jacob.

While this was passing, Cordwell Firebras drew a stool towards the chair which the miser had just taken. "I presume, Mr. Scarve, there are no eaves-droppers?" he said, glancing at the door.

"I hope not," replied the miser, who eyed him with great repugnance; "but if you have any secret matters to discuss, you had better speak in a low tone."

"Very well," resumed Firebras, complying with the hint; "we must have a little chat together about this young man—this Randolph Crew."

"I guessed what was coming," groaned the miser.

"You cannot now mistake your daughter's partiality for him," pursued Firebras; "and, on the other hand, I can tell you that he is devotedly attached to her."

"Likely enough," replied the miser; "but I will never consent to his union with her."

"You *must* consent if I require you to do so," said Firebras coldly.

The miser moved uneasily in his chair.

"You will not pretend to dispute my power to compel you to give her to him?" pursued Firebras. "I have but to produce a certain paper that you know off, and she is his."

"Not so fast," rejoined the miser. "You hold this document *in terrorem* over me—but how if I resist it?"

"You cannot resist it," replied Firebras—"you have bound yourself too strongly. Let me remind you of the packet delivered to you by Randolph Crew. Your daughter, too, will side with me. I have only to acquaint her with certain facts, and you well know what the consequences will be."

"Well, take her," cried the miser—"take her—but you will have her without a penny."

"Scarcely so," rejoined Firebras. "Randolph shall have her, and shall also have the fortune you agreed to settle upon her."

"I agreed to give her to the son of a man of fortune, and to make a settlement upon her corresponding with his property," said the miser; "but this young man has nothing."

"I have something to say on that head," rejoined Firebras. "Randolph, you are aware, assigned his own life interest in the entailed property to his father's creditors."

"I know it—I know it," said the miser hastily; "more fool he for doing so."

"But do you know who those creditors are?" said Firebras.

"No," replied the miser; "do you?"

"I do," replied Firebras, smiling significantly; "and I know, moreover, how the property might be recovered from them."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the miser, staring at him.

"What should you say if Randolph were again to be put in possession of his estates, and three thousand a year?" pursued Firebras. "Would you then feel disposed to fulfil your engagement?"

"It would make a material difference, certainly," said the miser. "But you are merely saying this to try me."

"No such thing," rejoined Firebras. "I am perfectly serious. Now mark me, Mr. Scarve. A few thousand pounds will settle the matter with these creditors, and Randolph's property will be unencumbered."

"And you will advance those few thousand pounds for him, of course?" said the miser drily.

"No; you will," returned Firebras. "It will be your interest to do so."

"Hum!" exclaimed the other.

"If he espouses your daughter, he must espouse the Jacobite cause also," pursued Firebras; "that we must both insist upon. His mother will be in town to-day, and we shall have her to back us."

"You lay out your schemes very fairly," said the miser; "but I am persuaded they will fall to the ground. Prove to me that Randolph can regain his property, and let me hear from his own lips an avowal that he will join our party, and I then may begin to think of giving my consent,"

"It shall be my business to do so," replied Firebras; "and now, good morning. Most likely I may call again in the evening."

And, putting on his hat, he took his departure without summoning Jacob.

II

*Mrs. Crew—Her Solitude about her Son; and
her Conversation with Abel.*

IN the course of the afternoon, Randolph was transported to his uncle's house at Lambeth. He was feverish and restless, and kept constantly inquiring after his mother, declaring he was sure she had arrived, but was purposely kept out of his sight.

An opiate having been administered, he presently began to experience its effects, and sank into a profound slumber, from which he did not awake till late in the following day. When he opened his eyes, he found the surgeon seated by his bedside, feeling his pulse.

"You are wonderfully better, and wholly free from fever, sir," said Mr. Molson; "and if you can promise me to keep all emotion under control, I think I may yield to the entreaties of one who is most anxious to see you."

"My mother!" exclaimed Randolph. "Ah! admit her, by all means. Her presence will calm rather than excite me."

"I am not quite so sure of that," hesitated Molson; "however, I will risk it." And quitting the room, he returned the next moment and introduced Mrs. Crew, who uttered a slight cry, and would have rushed forward, but he detained her, whispering, "Remember your promise, madam. It was only on the understanding that you would maintain your composure that I allowed you to see him." Thus cautioned, Mrs. Crew softly approached the bed, and taking the hand which her son extended to her, pressed it to her lips. She said nothing, but her bosom heaved quickly, and Randolph felt the hot tears falling fast upon his hand.

"Do not distress yourself, dearest mother," he said. "I am already so well that if this gentleman would allow me, I could get up."

"Your son is doing exceedingly well, madam," said Mr. Molson significantly; "and if we pay him due

attention, he may leave his bed in three or four days."

Roused by this remark, Mrs. Crew looked up, and fixed a glance full of inexpressible tenderness and affection upon her son. Though her countenance bore traces of much sorrow and anxiety, she was still a very handsome woman, and had a tall fine figure; full, as became her years, yet not so full as to interfere with the gracefulness of its proportions. She was two years younger than Trussell, being just forty-four, and might have been thought much younger, but for the careworn expression above mentioned, which, while it added age to her features, lent interest to them at the same time. Her lineaments strikingly resembled those of her son, but were more delicately formed, and her eyes were blue, large, and of the purest water. She was dressed in deep mourning of simple material, and wore her own hair, originally of a bright and beautiful brown, but now mingled with grey. Charms such as Mrs. Crew possessed, must, it is scarcely necessary to say, have won her many admirers when they were at their best; and some four-and-twenty years ago, she was sought on all hands, and had many brilliant alliances proposed to her; but her heart was early engaged to him to whom she was eventually united; and she continued true to his memory, for though two of her old admirers found her out in her widowhood, and renewed the proposals made in the meridian of her attractions, and though both these offers were advantageous, while her own worldly circumstances, as has been shown, were so much reduced as almost

to justify a marriage of convenience, both were unhesitatingly rejected. Mrs. Crew partook of the good qualities of both her brothers ; possessing the sound judgment and kindness of Abel, without his asperity, and much of the good nature, without the worldliness, of Trussell. Throughout the whole of her married life, her conduct had been exemplary. Devotedly attached to her husband, she strove, by the care which she paid to the management of the affairs entrusted to her, to make up in some degree for his extravagance ; and though she was unable entirely to accomplish her object, she did much to retard his progress towards ruin.

Mr. Crew was one of those persons, who, whatever their fortune, will live beyond it. Warm-hearted and hospitable, he kept open house, a dozen hunters, twice as many servants, a pack of hounds, and was not over particular in the choice of his associates. The consequence was, that he speedily became embarrassed, and, instead of retrenching, raised money in the readiest way he could, and lived harder and more recklessly than ever. He was fond of horse-racing and cock-fighting, and though by no means a gambler, frequently lost more at play than a prudent gentleman would care to lose. As Randolph grew up, he perceived the necessity of retrenchment, and, for nearly a year, decidedly changed his mode of life. But he was not adapted by nature to follow up such a course with perseverance. Long before the year was over, he began to find his plans of economy irksome, and at the end of it, launched into his old expenses.

About this time, some designing persons got hold of him. Advances were made on most usurious terms, and he soon became inextricably involved. For the last two years of his life, he drank hard, discontinued most of the healthful exercises to which he had been accustomed, seldom hunted, and amused himself chiefly with bowling. This fatal course soon began to tell upon him. The infirmities of age came on before their time, and he died under fifty, with every appearance of an old man. On examination, his affairs were found frightfully embarrassed, and Randolph, who had just come of age, having stated his intentions to his father before his death, and obtained his mother's assent to the arrangement, assigned the whole of the entailed property to the creditors, retaining only for himself what would barely afford him the means of living. Mrs. Crew, it has been stated, had a small separate property of her own, settled upon her by her father at the time of her marriage; but, between mother and son, they had not now in hundreds a year what Mr. Crew had once had in thousands.

Throughout all the trying circumstances above narrated, Mrs. Crew had conducted herself admirably. She never irritated her husband with reproaches, nor wearied him with advice, which her good sense told her would be unavailing; but assisted him, as far as was in her power, and cheered him in his distresses, taking care not to let her own affliction be apparent. At no time did she ever complain of him, even to her brothers. Indeed, she did not complain of ill-treatment, for

Mr. Crew was sincerely attached to her, and but for his imprudence, they might have been as happy a couple as ever lived. The sweetness and amiability of her disposition was evinced on all occasions, but never so strongly as during the last two years of her husband's life, when his debilitated constitution and pressing cares impaired his naturally good temper, and rendered him fretful and impatient of trifles. The tenderest attachment subsisted between Randolph and his mother. Always treated with confidence, he had no reserve from her, but regarded her in the light both of a parent and a friend.

Mrs. Crew remained nearly an hour by her son's bedside, gazing at him, and answering the questions he put to her about her journey and other matters as briefly as possible; for, in compliance with the surgeon's injunctions, she avoided anything like continuous discourse. At length, discerning some slight symptoms of fatigue about him, she pressed his hand softly and quitted the room. On going downstairs, she proceeded to the library, where she found her brothers. Trussell anxiously inquired how she had left the patient.

"He is doing well, I believe," she replied; "but oh! brother, what a meeting has this been! I trust it is the last duel he will ever be engaged in."

"I think he has come off famously," replied Trussell. "I called to inquire after Villiers last night, and I understand he is likely to be laid up for a fortnight at the least."

"I am glad to hear it," observed Abel; "and

I wish from my heart that Randolph's wound had been more severe."

"O brother! why such a wish as that?" exclaimed Mrs. Crew.

"Because I would have his first duel his last, sister," said Abel. "I entirely disapprove of the practice of duelling, and think it utterly opposed to the religious principles we profess."

"The duel is a necessity imposed upon society," said Trussell, "and, in my opinion, never can be dispensed with, unless a total revolution takes place in our manners and habits. It is the only check that holds certain characters in restraint, and though the practice may be carried too far, and swords be drawn on trifling occasions, a great good is accomplished by the recognition and maintenance of a code of honour, to which all gentlemen must subscribe, and any infraction of which involves the loss of social position. Moralists may preach as they please, but as long as society is constituted as it is at present—as long as such men as Villiers exist—duelling must and will prevail."

"There are other modes of avenging an injury besides violence," replied Abel; "and I trust society, in some more enlightened age, will fix such a brand upon the evil-doer, that it shall be in itself sufficient punishment for his offence. As we are now circumstanced, it may be impossible for a gentleman to avoid a quarrel; but he should never voluntarily seek it."

"I am bound to say, in Randolph's justification," rejoined Trussell, "since you both view the matter

in so grave a light, and I say it advisedly, that he has acted throughout this affair as becomes a gentleman and a man of honour. Such is the opinion of both his adversaries—and such is my own opinion. You have reason to be proud of him, Sophia.”

“I once thought so,” she replied sadly.

“And, believe me, he has done nothing to forfeit your good opinion,” rejoined Trussell; “but much that should raise it.”

“I am not alone annoyed at the duels,” said Abel, “but at the cause of them. It was my particular wish that Randolph should avoid Hilda Scarve—my expressed wish; and now he has been so circumstanced with her, that any feeling he might entertain towards her will be greatly strengthened. Trussell, you have laid up for your charge a great store of unhappiness. He will soon be cured of the wound he has received in this encounter—but will his passion for Hilda be equally soon cured?”

“That is impossible to say,” replied Trussell; “some men easily get over a disappointment in love.”

“And others never!” rejoined Abel bitterly.

“I meant no allusion to you, sir,” cried Trussell, reddening—“none whatever.”

“Nor did I suspect you of doing so,” returned Abel; “but if Randolph loves sincerely, he will feel the blow to his dying day.”

“And if he *does* love sincerely, brother, why—oh! why—interfere between him and the object of his affections?” said Mrs. Crew.

“I do not interfere with him—God forbid I

should do so!" rejoined Abel. "Let him marry Hilda, if he will. Let him obtain her father's consent, if he can."

"But will you give *your* consent, brother?" cried Mrs. Crew.

"No!" replied Abel emphatically, "I will not. I told him, when I first saw this girl, to avoid her on pain of my displeasure. He has disobeyed me, and must take the consequences. But what matters my consent? I will have nothing to do with the affair. I wash my hands of it altogether. I have my own reasons, which suffice to myself, for objecting to the union; but I will not be placed in a painful and ungracious position, and be compelled to oppose it. I will have nothing to do with it—nothing whatever."

"Randolph will incur your displeasure if he marries Hilda, will he not?" asked Mrs. Crew.

"Most assuredly," replied Abel; "I will never see him or her again. I will not be pressed to assign a reason for this determination; nor will I say more than I have done. I wish him to be wholly uninfluenced by me. Neither will I have it said that I interfered with his happiness."

"And yet, believe me, it will be both said and felt so, brother," rejoined Mrs. Crew. "Beware, lest you inflict a blow upon your nephew as severe as that you have endured yourself."

Abel uttered a sharp cry, and walked away, while Trussell looked at his sister to intimate she had gone too far. She instantly arose, and going up to Abel, took his hand, nor did he withdraw it from her.

"Pardon me, brother," she said, "if I have spoken what is painful to you; but I am anxious to spare you further affliction. I know, though you have tried to case your heart in armour of proof, how tender it is—how readily wounded. I have wept for your unhappy lot, and would do all in my power to avert further distress from you. If, as I have reason to believe, Randolph is devotedly attached to Hilda Scarve, I am certain, from what I know of his disposition, that a disappointment in obtaining her will blight him for life, and I am sure it would be only increasing your own unhappiness, to feel that you had made him miserable."

"But I do not make him miserable, sister," cried Abel sharply. "He is a free agent, and can marry whom he pleases without my consent."

"I have told you he will never do so, brother," said Mrs. Crew. "His future happiness or misery rests with you."

"Sophia, I will not endure this," said Abel sternly; "and I request the subject may never be mentioned again. I have no desire to wound your feelings, but the truth must not be hidden from you. Since his arrival in town, Randolph has exhibited such a turn for gaiety and dissipation, that I think it would be very unwise in him to marry at all—at least, at present."

"If he cannot marry advantageously," interposed Trussell, "I am clearly of Abel's opinion. His tastes and habits are rather expensive."

"Expensive!" exclaimed Mrs. Crew. "They were most moderate."

"Then he has a slight taste for play," pursued Trussell; "and is decidedly partial to society and amusement."

"I'll hurry him back into the country as soon as he is able to move!" cried Mrs. Crew, greatly alarmed.

"And you'll do wisely," said Abel.

"I don't think he'll go," rejoined Trussell, laughing; "and if he does, he'll soon find his way back again. He's too fond of town to be long away from it."

"Oh! how changed he must be!" exclaimed Mrs. Crew.

"He owes it all to his uncle Trussell," rejoined Abel sharply.

"Then he owes me a great deal," replied Trussell; "and I hope he won't forget the debt. I think the plan of hurrying him into the country quite wrong. If you wish Hilda to make a deep impression upon him, that will be the surest way to accomplish the object. In town he has a thousand distractions. I cannot exactly say how he will stand with Lady Brabazon after this duel; but there's Kitty Conway—and he is sure to have plenty of new entanglements."

"Brother," cried Mrs. Crew—"you only furnish me with additional reasons for desiring to take him away."

"I am very sorry he ever came," said Abel. "It has disturbed the whole of my arrangements, and opened old wounds, which, though not closed, were yet not painful. Even Trussell has been unsettled by it."

"Not in the least, sir," replied Trussell. "I have enjoyed his visit amazingly, and should belie myself confoundedly if I said otherwise. I wish I could prevail upon you to let him remain here a few months longer, and give him another hundred or so—and then——"

"Plunge him back again into poverty!" cried Abel, cutting him short. "What would be the use of such a course? What good purpose would it answer? He has apparently no wish to embark in any profession. And why should I furnish him with the means of continuing his career of dissipation? No. I will do no such thing."

"Will you see how he goes on for a month after his convalescence?" asked Trussell. "Surely, that is no great length of time to allow him."

"I will promise nothing," replied Abel. "And now, brother, I shall be glad to be left alone for a short time with Sophia."

"Willingly, sir," replied Trussell. And he quitted the room.

Abel then took a chair, and motioned his sister to seat herself beside him. For a few moments he continued silent, as if summoning up resolution to address her; at length he spoke.

"You have alluded to past times, Sophia," he said, in faltering tones; "and have contrasted my position with that of your son, but you well know they are widely different. Nay, do not interrupt me—I know what you would say. Randolph has personal advantages which I never possessed, and which are sure to win him favour in the eyes of your

sex. Besides, his nature does not resemble mine ; his feelings are not so acute and concentrated ; nor do I believe he could love so deeply. The love I entertained for Arabella Clinton was not the growth of a day—a month—a year—but the love of years. I had seen her opening beauties expand—had acquainted myself with her mind—ascertained her disposition, her temper—knew all her feelings, and persuaded myself she requited my love.”

“And she did requite it, brother,” replied Mrs. Crew. “She did love you.”

“In mercy, do not tell me so !” cried Abel, becoming as pale as death. “I would rather think she hated me—deceived me ; but loved me !—that belief is only wanting to make me thoroughly wretched !”

“Calm yourself, dear brother,” said Mrs. Crew. “I would not increase your unhappiness for the world ; but I am persuaded that the examination of this subject, which, from unhappy circumstances, we have never hitherto been able to discuss, will, in the end, relieve you of much anxiety.”

“I will try to bear it in that hope,” replied Abel ; “but the barbed arrow is too firmly and too deeply planted to be removed. You will only lacerate me further in the attempt.”

“I will not be intimidated,” rejoined Mrs. Crew. “I shall begin by telling you that it is your own fault that Arabella Clinton was not your wife. You have alluded to the deep passion you entertained for her, and your doubts of her affection for you. I do not say she loved you with equal passion, because

you were not a person to inspire such ardour, neither was she one to feel it, for her nature was frigid. But she loved you well enough to have been your wife; and what is more, she thoroughly respected you; and therefore there can be no doubt you might have been happy."

"Go on!" groaned Abel.

"You will forgive me, if I speak plainly," pursued Mrs. Crew, "for I must do so to show you where you erred. Rating yourself too humbly, you pursued, as I conceive, a most unwise and dangerous plan, in order to test the sincerity of your mistress's attachment. Fearful she might accept you on the score of your wealth, you represented yourself as being in very moderate circumstances; and, while full of tenderness and affection, adopted not unfrequently a harsh and forbidding manner towards her."

"True, true!" cried Abel.

"You were both the victims of error," continued Mrs. Crew. "Deceived by your manner, she thought you had conceived a dislike for her, and strove to wean herself from all regard for you; while her efforts made you believe you were indifferent to her. All, however, might have come right, but for the fatal mistake of deluding her as to your circumstances. With her, wealth was of little importance, and she would have married you as readily poor as rich; but with her father it was otherwise."

"Her father was aware of my circumstances," said Abel in a sombre tone.

"He was so," replied Mrs. Crew; "but it was his business to conceal them, for Arabella had a richer

suitor, whom he preferred. Captivated by her beauty, Mr. Scarve proposed to her, and his suit was seconded by her father, who told her you were needy, sour-tempered, and indifferent to her. Doubly deceived, she hesitated. Instead of seeking an explanation, you avoided it, and retired to make way for your rival."

"I did so because I thought him preferred," said Abel.

"Several slight circumstances, I know, conspired to confirm you in your opinion," said Mrs. Crew; "but they were all devised by Mr. Clinton. A false construction was put upon your absence, and Arabella was induced to give her hand to Mr. Scarve."

"Why was I not told all this at the time?" cried Abel.

"Because I was not aware of it myself," replied Mrs. Crew. "You may remember that this occurred during the period of my engagement to my poor husband, who was an old and intimate friend of Mr. Scarve's, and consequently, and not unnaturally, disliked by you. This produced a coolness between you. Besides, to be plain with you, I did not understand or estimate your character then as thoroughly as I do now. I thought you cold and repelling, and never gave you credit for the depth of feeling you have since exhibited. Neither had Mr. Scarve displayed himself in his true colours then. At that time he was passably good-looking, kept a tolerable establishment, and I really thought Arabella was better off than if she had married you. I was angry, too, that you had attempted to test her affections by

misrepresenting your circumstances, and thought you rightly served in losing her. Hence arose the misunderstanding between us, which separated us to the present period."

"But how do you know Arabella's sentiments towards me were such as you describe?" asked Abel.

"I have it under her own hand," replied Mrs. Crew. "She wrote to me a full explanation of all the circumstances connected with this part of her life, stating how sincerely she had loved you, and how much she lamented that a mistake had separated her from you. From her letters, and from other information afforded me by my husband, I have been enabled to understand the whole case. You have been the victim of misunderstanding. But console yourself. A thousandth part of the suffering you have undergone would atone for a more grievous error than you have committed. Console yourself, I say. You were beloved by Arabella Clinton, and to the last, she entertained the sincerest regard for you."

"That is indeed a consolation to me," said Abel, melting into tears. "I am not ashamed to indulge this weakness in your presence, sister," he added in a broken voice.

"Those tears will do you good," she replied, "and I pray you to indulge them freely. The past will not henceforth be so painful to contemplate; for, if I mistake not, your bitterest pang was the idea that you had never been loved."

"It was!" gasped Abel.

"And that has now been removed," replied Mrs.

Crew. "Here are Arabella's letters," she added, giving him a small packet. "You will see from them how you have misunderstood her."

Abel took the letters, glanced at the superscription with a shudder, and placed them in his breast.

"I will read them," he said; "but not now."

"Does Hilda Scarve resemble her mother?" asked Mrs. Crew, after a pause.

"She is like her, but handsomer," replied Abel. "I have seen her upon two occasions lately, and she appears a very amiable girl."

"Then what objection can there be to an union between her and Randolph?" asked Mrs. Crew.

"I have said I will not be pressed on that head," rejoined Abel sternly. "I have an objection—a strong objection. What it is, you shall know at another time."

"Heaven grant that these two young people may not be equally victims of a mistake with you and Arabella!" sighed Mrs. Crew.

At this moment, Mr. Jukes entered the room.

"Mr. Scarve's servant, Jacob Post, has called to inquire after Mr. Randolph," he said; "and understanding that you are here, madam, he craves permission to see you."

"May he come in, brother?" said Mrs. Crew.

"Certainly," was the reply. And Jacob was ushered into the room.

"I'm glad to hear Mr. Randolph is gettin' on so well, ma'am," he said, with an uncouth reverence to Mrs. Crew. "Lord lov'ee! how like you are to him, to be sure."

"I hope your young mistress has got over the fright she underwent at Vauxhall, Jacob?" said Mrs. Crew.

"Why, yes, pretty well, thankee, ma'am," replied Jacob. "She looks rayther palish; but whether from fright, or concern for Mr. Randolph, I'm sure I can't say."

"You were present, Jacob, when my son rescued her from the libertine, Villiers—were you not?" asked Mrs. Crew.

"I was, ma'am," replied Jacob; "and I never saw a more sperited gen'l'man i' my life. I should like to see him, and thank him for the pinkin' he has given that beau."

"It cannot be at present, Jacob," replied Mrs. Crew. "He is ordered to be kept perfectly quiet; and even I am not allowed to remain in his room."

"There is no danger, ma'am, I hope?" asked Jacob, with real concern.

"None whatever, if he's not excited," returned Mrs. Crew.

"I am glad to hear it," said Jacob, brightening up; "and Miss Hilda'll be glad to hear it too. She'd never ha' got over it, if anything had happened to him on her account."

"Is she then so much interested in him?" asked Mrs. Crew.

"Why, you see, ma'am," said Jacob, rather puzzled, and gazing from the questioner to Abel, who eyed him very curiously, "it's nat'rel she should be interested in a gen'l'man as has rendered her such important services as Mr. Randolph has done."

"Quite natural," replied Mrs. Crew. "But I wish to ask you a plain question: Is, or is not, Miss Hilda kindly affected toward my son?"

"Then I'll answer the question as plainly as it's asked, ma'am," replied Jacob—"she is."

Mrs. Crew glanced at her brother, and Jacob took his cue from the glance.

"I hope the two may come together, ma'am," he said. "I'm sure they're cut out for each other."

"I can't help thinking so, from all I hear of Hilda," said Mrs. Crew.

"It is idle to speculate upon what can never take place," said Abel sternly. "Go and get something to eat, Jacob, and tell your young lady that Mr. Randolph will be quite himself in a few days—that he is going on as well as possible—that there is no sort of danger."

"In other words, that there's no occasion to send to inquire after him again—eh, sir?" said Jacob.

"Exactly," replied Abel. "Good-day, Jacob—good-day."

"I don't like him half so well as I did before," thought Jacob, as he left the room and marched off to the butler's pantry, to Mr. Jukes, who placed bread and cold meat, together with a jug of stout ale, before him.

"Here's Mr. Randolph's speedy recovery," cried Jacob.

"I pledge you in that toast," said Mr. Jukes, filling himself a glass, and draining it.

Soon after the porter's departure, Abel quitted his sister with the intention of going forth on

business. While she was pondering on what had passed between them, the door was opened by Mr. Jukes, who told her that a gentleman had called to see her, and the next moment he ushered in Cordwell Firebras.

III

*Detailing the Interview between Cordwell Firebras
and Mrs. Crew.*

MRS. CREW, though a good deal surprised and startled, maintained her composure sufficiently well not to attract the notice of the butler, who, having placed a chair for the visitor, quitted the room.

"I have called to inquire after your son, madam," commenced Firebras. "I was present at the affair yesterday, and can confirm what you have no doubt heard from your brother, that he conducted himself admirably throughout it."

"My son, I am happy in being able to state, is rapidly recovering," replied Mrs. Crew; "and having satisfied you on this point, sir, I must entreat you to abridge your visit as much as possible. I would not on any account that my brother Abel should find you here."

"There is no fear of that, madam," replied Firebras. "I watched him go forth before I ventured to make my call. But time is precious, and I will come to the object of my visit at once. I wrote to you to tell you how much captivated your son was with Mr. Scarve's fair daughter, Hilda. A

slight act of imprudence on his part for some time alienated the young lady's regard; but he set himself right with her at Ranelagh, and at Vauxhall made rapid progress in her affections. I was present when the result of the duel was communicated to her yesterday, and if I had entertained any previous doubt as to the extent of Randolph's hold upon her heart, her conduct then would have removed it. She was taken fainting from the room."

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Crew—"I'm sorry for her."

"Why sorry?" rejoined Firebras. "Randolph will make her an excellent husband."

"But they will never be united," said Mrs. Crew, sighing deeply.

"It will be his own fault if they are not," observed Firebras drily.

"How so?" cried Mrs. Crew; "both his uncle and her father are against the match."

"That I well know," replied Firebras; "but both may be brought to assent to it."

"You are trifling with me," said the lady.

"I thought you had known me better, Mrs. Crew, than to suppose me capable of trifling on a serious subject," rejoined Firebras, almost sternly. "I can make good my words. Of Mr. Scarve's consent I am sure."

"He must have altered his mind, then, completely," said Mrs. Crew; "for I have been told he intended her for his nephew, and forbade Randolph his house."

"He *will* consent, if I require it," said Firebras significantly.

"You amaze me," exclaimed Mrs. Crew. "My brother, however, has, within these few minutes, refused to give his consent, and Randolph cannot marry without it."

"Why cannot he?" replied Firebras, smiling. "It is not always necessary to ask an uncle's consent in these cases. Still, as Randolph has considerable expectations from your brother, it would be better not to offend him. I do not despair of winning him over."

"You will accomplish a miracle if you do so," said Mrs. Crew.

"And I *will* accomplish it, and more, provided Randolph joins our party," replied Firebras.

"He refused your former overtures, did he not?" asked Mrs. Crew.

"He did," replied Firebras; "but I should have succeeded with him, if it had not been for the interference of your brother Abel."

"I am rejoiced to hear it," cried Mrs. Crew.

"How!" exclaimed Firebras, "are you no longer faithful to our cause?"

"As faithful as ever," replied Mrs. Crew; "but I would rather my son died than forfeit his honour—and he must forfeit it if he joins us in any other way than on conviction."

"Pshaw! it is not necessary to look at the matter so nicely," replied Firebras contemptuously. "We must make proselytes the best way we can. Randolph will be very useful to us on the approaching

outbreak, and I am therefore anxious to secure him. He is precisely the person I want to attend upon the prince—and have him I will.”

“You are very peremptory, sir,” said Mrs. Crew.

“You accused me of trifling with you just now, madam,” pursued Firebras, “but I will show you I am in earnest. Your son’s whole destiny is in my hands; and it depends altogether on me whether his future course is brilliant, successful, and happy, or the reverse. Not only can I wed him to the object of his affections—not only can I procure him a handsome dower from her father—not only can I secure the consent of his uncle—but I can restore to him the estates which he has given up to his father’s creditors, and place him in the position he is entitled to occupy. All this I can, and will do.”

“Provided he joins you?” said Mrs. Crew.

“Of course,” replied Firebras—“of course.”

“Then I fear he will remain in his present condition,” sighed Mrs. Crew.

“Let us look at the other side of the case,” pursued Firebras sternly. “This is not a matter on which to be scrupulous, and I am determined to carry my point. If Randolph refuses to join me, he loses Hilda—loses her dower—loses his uncle’s fortune—and his own. Without me Mr. Scarve will never give him his daughter; and without me he will never recover his property. Now, mark me, madam, for I know your son better than you do. He is a fine-spirited young man, and endowed with excellent qualities; but he has essentially the habits and feelings of a gentleman, and your brother

Trussell has taken care to inoculate him with his own tastes and propensities. He will never be content with the quiet life he has hitherto led ; but, tormented by his love for Hilda, and the sense of what he has lost, will be driven to some desperate course."

"He may yet marry her, though without her father's consent," said Mrs. Crew.

"And marry to beggary," rejoined Firebras, with a bitter laugh. "I do not wish to hold out threats—and what I say is said only to show my power. He never shall marry Hilda Scarve, nor shall he ever enjoy his own again, unless he joins the Jacobite cause. I can prevent both, and I *will* prevent them. His decision must be made quickly, *for he is wanted*. Within a month from this time he must be mine, or all will be lost to him. As a prudent and affectionate mother—as a well-wisher to our cause—I look to you, madam, to use all your influence with him to produce this result."

"I cannot—I cannot!" she rejoined.

"Then you destroy him," said Firebras.

"Oh, put it not thus," she rejoined. "You were an old friend of his father's, and received much kindness, and, unless I mistake, pecuniary assistance from him. Do not act thus cruelly towards the son of your old friend!"

"Cruelly!" exclaimed Firebras, laughing derisively. "I offer him a fortune and the lady of his love, and you call it cruelty—ha! ha!"

"But at the price of his honour," said Mrs. Crew.

"His honour! bah!" exclaimed Firebras con-

temptuously. "What is to stain his honour in quitting the cause of a miserable usurper to join that of the rightful claimant of the throne? If you persist in such a notion, I shall begin to doubt the constancy of your own opinions."

"I should be glad if Randolph would voluntarily embrace our cause," said Mrs. Crew; "but I would disown him if he were base enough to be *bought*."

"Well, I have placed both views of the case fairly before you," said Firebras, rising—"weigh over what I have said, and decide."

And as he turned to depart, he encountered Abel Beechcroft, who had entered the room unobserved. "So!" he exclaimed, without losing his composure, "we have had a listener here, eh? You have heard what has passed between us, Mr. Beechcroft?"

"Some part of it," replied Abel; "and I applaud my sister's conduct as much as I condemn yours. You have stated that you can compel me to give my consent to my nephew's marriage with Hilda Scarve. Be pleased to prove the assertion, sir."

"You have me at a disadvantage, Mr. Beechcroft, because I have not had time to put my plan into operation," replied Firebras. "Nevertheless, if I can prove to you that I can recover your nephew's property—and that I will only do so on the condition of your giving your unqualified consent to his union with the young lady in question, you will not refuse it?"

"Coupled as it is with the other condition you have annexed to it, I should deem it my duty to do so," rejoined Abel. "But you must excuse me if I

say that I distrust your power of getting back my nephew's property."

"I shall not make the rejoinder which I should do to one of less pacific disposition than yourself, Mr. Beechcroft," replied Firebras sternly. "But you have doubted my word unjustly. I *can*, if I choose, get back Randolph Crew's property."

"Are you one of his father's creditors?" demanded Abel.

"It matters not what I am," returned Firebras. "It must suffice that I can make good my assertion."

"If you are not a creditor," rejoined Abel, "I can obtain the property for him as readily myself."

"You are welcome to make the experiment," said Firebras, with a slight laugh of defiance. "Mrs. Crew, I have the honour to wish you a good morning. Though my plans have been somewhat precipitated by your worthy brother, I still am not without hopes that he will come into them; and at all events, his presence at the interview will save you the necessity of explanation. Your son, I trust, will speedily be master of his property, the husband of Hilda, and——"

"A Jacobite," supplied Abel.

"Precisely," said Firebras, laughing. "Good morning, Mr. Beechcroft." And, turning from Abel, he left the room.

"That is a daring and a dangerous man," said Abel to his sister.

"A highly dangerous man," she replied; "and Randolph must be preserved from him."

"He must," replied Abel. "I shall make it my

immediate business to ascertain how far there is a probability of his being correct in his statement about the property. It was fortunate that I chanced to come back. Jukes told me there was some one with you, and from his description of the person, I felt sure who it must be. Let us go into the garden, and talk the matter over further."

IV

Treats of the Miser's Illness; and of the Discovery of the Mysterious Packet by Hilda.

HILDA SCARVE had soon a new cause of anxiety. Not only was she uneasy about Randolph, whose recovery was not quite so rapid as had been anticipated, but her father's state of health began to occasion her considerable alarm. While walking out, he got caught in the rain; and on his return home, though drenched to the skin, refused to change his clothes. A low fever was the consequence; and holding apothecary's stuff, as he termed physic, in abhorrence, he would take nothing to carry it off. Owing to this neglect, that which was a slight matter in the commencement, ended in becoming a serious illness.

One day, in spite of his daughter's entreaties, he would go forth; and after being absent a few hours, during which, as it appeared, he had walked to a considerable distance, he returned in such a state of exhaustion that Hilda was quite terrified.

All, however, she could prevail upon him to take was a small basin of weak water-gruel, but without even a teaspoonful of wine or brandy in it.

Next morning he was considerably better, and Hilda thought the crisis past; but she was mistaken, and so was her father; for, fancying that the exercise of the previous day had done him good, he went out again, walked farther than before, got caught a second time in the rain, and fearfully increased the fever. On this occasion he was persuaded to take off his wet clothes and go to bed, and even to have a small fire lighted in his chamber, where none had ever before been lighted in his time. Watching this operation with the utmost anxiety, he called to Jacob, who was laying the fire, not to waste the wood, though only three or four small chips were used; next, blamed him for putting on too much coal; and, lastly, forbade him to light it. Jacob, however, ventured to disobey his orders, and having applied a match to some bits of paper stuck in the bars, quitted the room.

As soon as he was gone, the miser instantly sprang out of bed, and without much difficulty extinguished the only partially kindled fire. Shortly afterwards, Hilda came into the room, and finding what had happened, besought him to let the fire be lighted, and at last wrung from him a most reluctant assent.

But again another accident occurred. More paper was lighted, the wood caught, and began to crackle in the bars. The chimney, however, smoked, and Jacob, peeping up it to ascertain the cause, perceived

that it was stopped by a wisp of straw. He immediately thrust up his arm, pulled down the obstacle, and in so doing, dislodged two heavy bags, which fell into the fire with a rattling noise, proclaiming the nature of their contents.

At this sound, the miser, who had been sinking into a slumber, instantly sprang up, and uttering a wild cry, ordered both his daughter and Jacob out of the room. They knew him too well to disobey, and as soon as they were gone, he got out of bed again, plucked the bags from the fire, which luckily had not burnt the sacking, and, locking them carefully up in a strong box, placed the key under his pillow. But the idea of the discovery of his hoard haunted him, and, combined with the fever, prevented the possibility of slumber. He tried to recollect the different places where he had hidden money, and, unable to call them all to mind, grew almost distracted. Hilda begged to be allowed to sit up with him, but he would not allow her; neither would he permit Jacob to do so.

Waiting till he thought all were asleep, he then rose, and wrapping himself in his dressing-gown, proceeded to examine several nooks and crannies in the room, in which he had placed small sums of money. All his hoards were safe, except one. He had put ten guineas in a glove about two months before, and fancied he had hidden it behind a shutter. But it was not there, and convinced that Jacob had discovered it, and purloined it, he was about to descend and tax him with the robbery when he all at once recollected having placed a

glove under a broken plank near the hearthstone. He immediately took up the board, and there, sure enough, was the lost treasure.

Made easy by this discovery, he restored the glove to its place, and returned to bed. Still he could not rest. An idea took possession of him, that the money he had buried in the cellar was gone, and unable to shake off the notion, he arose, and habiting himself as before, took the rushlight that burnt by his bedside, and with trembling but cautious steps, went downstairs.

Arrived at the cellar, he set down the rushlight, and cast an almost piteous look at the cask, beneath which he had buried his gold, as if seeking to know whether it was still there. At last he summoned up resolution for the task, and repairing to the coal-hole, possessed himself of the shovel, and commenced digging up the box. Anxiety supplied him with strength, and in less than half-an-hour, he had got out the box, opened it, and counted the money-bags, which he found all right. He would have counted the gold within them as well, but neither his strength nor time would allow him to do so.

While thus employed he formed a terrible representation of the effect that avarice may produce upon the mind. There he worked, burning with fever, in a damp cellar, half naked, for he had taken off his dressing-gown to enable him to ply the spade with greater freedom—there he worked, as if life and death were in his efforts, and almost looked, such was his ghastly appearance, like a corpse digging his own grave. It was a fearful sight to

see, and it was witnessed by one upon whom it made a lasting and forcible impression. This was his daughter. Hearing him go downstairs, she had followed him, and saw what he was about ; but did not dare to interrupt him, apprehensive of the consequences.

At last, when he had got out the box, and examined its contents, she hoped all was over, and proceeding to Jacob's room, roused him, and telling him what had happened, bade him watch his master, and then retired to her own chamber. Jacob obeyed, and having seen the former occurrence, was at no loss to comprehend what was now happening. He accordingly stationed himself at the door, and saw through the chink, for it was left ajar, that the miser was filling up the hole, and restoring the place to its former appearance.

It was wonderful, and almost incredible, to see how that feeble old man, shaken by sickness, and tottering on the verge of the grave, toiled—how he persevered—how he took the earth out of the cask—how he filled up the hole—how he restored the bricks to their places—how he trod them down with his naked feet. Jacob was amazed, and almost felt as if he was in a dream. But he was suddenly roused to full consciousness as the miser, having finished his task, leaned upon his spade to rest himself, but being completely overcome, uttered a deep groan and fell with his face upon the ground.

Instantly rushing towards him, Jacob found him senseless, and at first thought him dead ; but perceiving some symptoms of animation about him, he

lifted him up in his arms as easily as if he had been a child, and carried him upstairs to bed.

He then informed Hilda what had happened, and she hastened to apply such restoratives as she possessed, and which, ere long, to her infinite satisfaction, brought him back to consciousness. But he was not himself for some hours, and rambled incessantly about his treasure, which he imagined had been taken from him. Nature, however, at length asserted her sway, and he dropped asleep. During his slumbers, Jacob brought the chest upstairs with the money-bags in it, and placed it at the foot of his bed.

The miser did not wake till late in the following morning, and he was then very faint and light-headed. He swallowed a basin of strong broth, prepared for him by his daughter, with great greediness, for he was as much exhausted by want of food as from any other cause, and in the course of a few hours gained strength considerably.

As he got better, his head cleared, and he began to recollect something of the events of the previous night. At first he thought he must have dreamt of digging up his treasure; but by degrees becoming satisfied that he had really done so, he grew exceedingly uneasy, and desired to know how he had been put to bed. Hilda then told him, and showed him where the chest was placed, assuring him all was safe. Still he was not wholly satisfied, and later in the day, determined, in spite of all dissuasions to the contrary, to get up.

Left to himself, he locked the door, and examined

the bags, which were all tied in a peculiar manner, and sealed, and their appearance satisfied him that they had not been opened. He had not been long up, when he felt so dreadfully ill, that for the first time in his life, he began to think his end approaching. Falling back in his chair, he shook as with an ague, while cold perspiration burst from every pore. The fit, however, passed off, and he made an effort to crawl to the door, and call Jacob. The latter instantly answered the summons, and looked so unmistakably alarmed at his master's appearance, that the other could not but notice it.

"You think me very ill, Jacob?" said the miser. "Don't be afraid of frightening me—speak the truth—I know you do."

"Why, yea," rejoined Jacob; "you don't look well, certainly. If I was you, and I'd any affairs to arrange, I'd settle 'em quickly for fear of accident—that's all."

"I understand," replied the miser, with a ghastly grin; "but I'm not going to die just yet, Jacob—not just yet—don't think it."

"I'm sure I hope not," replied Jacob; "for though we haven't agreed over and above well of late, I should be sorry to lose you."

The miser turned away, and crept back to his chair, sinking into it exhausted by the effort he had made.

"I want you to go to Gray's Inn, Jacob," he said, at length, "to tell Mr. Diggs to come to me."

"What, to make your will!" rejoined Jacob. "Well, I think you're right there. No harm in bein' on the safe side."

"Never mind what I want him for," rejoined the miser, "do as I bid you."

"I wish you'd let me bring some other 'turney i'stead o' that smooth-faced, palaverin' Diggs," said Jacob. "A will's a serious affair, and I should be sorry you did an injustice that can't be repaired."

"Don't argue with me, rascal, but begone!" cried the miser.

"I don't like fetchin' Diggs," said Jacob. "Couldn't I make a will for you? A few words would do it—I leave all my property and possessions, whatsoever and wheresomedever, to my lawfully begotten daughter, Hilda Scarve.' That'll be quite enough, and far better than any will Mr. Diggs'll make for you. Besides, it'll cost you nothin'."

"This fellow will kill me!" groaned the miser. "Do go, Jacob!" he added imploringly.

"Well, I can't resist that," said Jacob; "but as you hope to be forgiven hereafter, don't act unjustly by your daughter."

"If you continue faithful to me to the last, I'll leave you a handsome legacy, Jacob," said the miser; "a handsome legacy—but not a farthing if you disobey me."

"I don't want a legacy," replied Jacob. "I'd rather not have it. But don't you forget your wife's sister, poor Mrs. Clinton. You've used her hardly this many a year. Make it up to her now."

"I must look ill, indeed!" groaned the miser, "since the rascal dares to talk to me thus. Will you go or not?" he asked.

"Oh yes, I'll go," said Jacob. "Shall I send your daughter to you?" And, receiving a faint reply in the affirmative, he quitted the room.

About an hour after this, he returned with Diggs, who was closeted with the miser for a long time. Jacob knew that some writing must be going forward, for he was ordered to take pen and ink upstairs; and he would fain have played the spy, but he could not do so without being detected. At length he was summoned by Diggs, who desired him to call a coach. He was not long in meeting with one; and on informing the attorney that it was ready for him, he was almost struck dumb with astonishment by an order from the latter to take down the chest containing the money-bags, and place it in the vehicle.

"Why, you don't mean to send that chest away?" he said to his master.

"Yes, that chest—that identical chest, my good fellow," said the attorney.

"But I must have the order from master's own lips, or I won't obey it," said Jacob doggedly.

"Will you be pleased, sir, to tell your servant what he is to do?" said Diggs impatiently.

"Take away the chest," replied the miser.

"What, this with the money in it—this here?" asked Jacob, giving it a sounding knock.

"Ay," rejoined the miser.

"Well, if I must, I must," said Jacob, shouldering the chest; "but it would have been safer i' the cellar than where it's a-goin' to."

He had scarcely placed his burden in the coach

when Diggs followed him, and jumping into the vehicle, ordered him, with a triumphant glance, to shut the door, and bid the coachman drive to his chambers.

"Gray's Inn, coachee!" cried Jacob, as he complied; "and may you break your fare's neck as you go," he added, in a lower tone.

His mind lightened, apparently, by what had taken place, Mr. Scarve remained perfectly quiet during the rest of the day, and retired early to rest; but he passed another sleepless night, and was seized with a new panic about his money.

The next day, finding himself unable to go downstairs, he ordered Jacob to bring up all his boxes, and to place them near him. His fever increasing, and assuming somewhat the character of an ague, he consented to have a small fire kept up constantly in his bedroom, and set his chair close beside it. In addition to his dressing-gown he wrapped an old blanket over his shoulders, and tried to keep his lower limbs warm by clothing them in a couple of pairs of worsted hose. His bed being totally destitute of hangings, he had a sheet hung up against the lower end of it to keep off the blaze of the fire, which he fancied disturbed him during the night. These slight comforts were all he permitted himself, and he remained as inflexible as ever on the score of medicine and medical advice.

"A doctor can do no good," he said to Jacob, who urged him to send for one; "if abstinence won't cure a man, no physic will."

"Well, perhaps you're right, sir," said Jacob;

“but I wish you'd think less o' your worldly affairs, and more o' your sperretual ones. Look at that pictur' over your chimney-piece, and see how Death is takin' away the covetous man's treasures before his very eyes. It might be intended as a warnin' to you.”

The picture alluded to by Jacob was a copy of one of Holbein's designs of the Dance of Death, suspended over the chimney-piece, and with the Scriptural motto underneath it—“*Stulte, hac nocte repetunt animam tuam; et quæ parasti cujus erunt?*”—did seem to have a fearful and solemn application to the present conjuncture. The miser shuddered as he looked at it, but he would not acknowledge the justice of the porter's remark.

Of late, he had begun to entertain a dislike to Jacob, and would scarcely suffer him to come near him.

Having seen him, when opening one of the boxes, take up an old stocking-foot in which a few pieces of silver were tied, he took it into his head that he designed to rob him; and his fears being magnified by his perturbed imagination, he soon persuaded himself that he also intended to murder him. To prevent any such design, he placed a loaded pistol on the chimney-piece near him, and hung a drawn sword on a peg, so as to be within reach in case of need. These weapons he carried with him to his bedside at night.

But he grew daily worse and worse, and his faculties became more and more enfeebled. He rambled about the house at night, almost in a state

of somnambulism, muttering strange things about his treasure, and frequently visiting the cellar where he had buried the chest, unconscious that it was gone. At such times, Jacob constantly followed, to prevent him from doing himself a mischief, but took care not to be seen. His groans and lamentations were pitiful to hear, for he had begun to fancy himself a ruined man, and not even the sight of his money could assure him to the contrary. It was vain to reason with him. The distressing idea was too strongly impressed upon his mind to be removed. His next whim was to have his boxes opened by Hilda, to whom he had entrusted his keys, and he insisted upon certain deeds and papers being read to him, the meaning of which he only very imperfectly comprehended.

One night, when seated by the fireside wrapped in his blanket, and with his feet on a straw hassock, he desired his daughter to read him some more papers. The fire burnt as cheerily as it could in the starveling grate, and Hilda insisting upon having two candles to read by, there was more light than usual. Having got through several mortgages, leases, and bonds, to the innumerable clauses of which he listened in his usual apathetic manner, he suddenly turned round to her, and pointing to the strong-box which formerly stood under his table in the room downstairs, signed to her to open it. Well aware that this box contained his most private papers, Hilda had hitherto avoided meddling with it, but thus enjoined, she no longer hesitated. Placing it on the table, therefore, she took the large

bunch of keys, and soon finding the right one, unlocked it.

"Is there anything in particular you wish me to read, dear father?" she said, taking out some papers tied together with red tape. "Here is a bond for two thousand pounds from George Delahay Villiers, Esquire; another from Lady Brabazon; and another from Sir Bulkeley Price. Shall I read any of them?"

The miser shook his head.

"Here are several bills," she continued, taking up a roll of smaller paper—"and another bundle of mortgages, will you hear any of them?"

The miser shook his head. The movement was almost mechanical with him.

"Then I will go on," pursued Hilda. "Ah! what is this letter with the black seal? Shall I read it?"

The miser made no reply. He was gazing listlessly into the fire, and watching the wreaths of smoke ascend the chimney with childish delight. Hilda, therefore, opened the letter, and found a small memorandum enclosed in it, which she placed upon the table. Trembling with emotion, she then began to read aloud the following lines:—

"**OLD AND VALUED FRIEND,**—If this should ever meet your eye, I shall have been a year in my grave, for, in accordance with our agreement, it will not be delivered to you until the expiration of that time after my death. The agreement, I need not remind you, was so formed that in case we should both die within the year, the contract entered into

WFOU



The Discovery of the Mysterious Packet



by us respecting the marriage of our children should be null and void.'"

Here Hilda was startled by a sharp cry from her father, and looking up, she saw that he was staring wildly and inquiringly at her.

"What are you reading?" he asked.

"The letter delivered to you by Randolph Crew," she replied—"the letter from his father."

"And what business have you to read it?" he cried. "Who gave you leave to do so?"

"Having gone so far, I shall go on," rejoined Hilda; and she resumed her reading.

"I now call upon you to fulfil your share of the contract, and to give your daughter to my son. When we entered into the engagement, I was supposed to be the richer of the two; but I am now sadly reduced, and if my son fulfils his word, and gives up the estates to pay my creditors, he will have little or nothing."

"He has nothing—he has nothing!" cried the miser. "I will never give my consent—never!"

"But under whatever circumstances he may be placed," said Hilda, continuing the letter, "whether he gives up the property or not, I call upon you to fulfil your part of the contract, as I would have fulfilled mine, whatever might have happened to you; and to make, as you have agreed to do, a settlement upon your daughter proportioned to your means."

"I made no such agreement!" cried the miser; "it is false—false!"

"I enclose a copy of the memorandum," pur-

sued Hilda, still reading; "the original, as you know, is in the possession of Cordwell Firebras. He will see it executed. God so requite you as you shall fulfil your agreement or neglect it!

"'RANDULPH CREW.'"

"And here is the memorandum," she added, taking up the smaller piece of paper. "It is signed by Randolph Crew and John Scarve."

"It is a forgery!" shrieked the miser.

"The original is in the possession of Cordwell Firebras," said Hilda. "Father, you have dealt unjustly by Randolph Crew. You owe him a great reparation, and I trust you will make it."

"I owe him nothing," replied the miser; "it is all a fabrication. Give me the papers, that I may burn them! Give them to me directly."

And getting up, he staggered towards her, and snatched the letter and memorandum from her, with the intention of throwing them into the fire. But before he could do so, the door opened, and admitted Abel Beechcroft.

"What do you want, sir?" cried the miser, regarding him fearfully, and letting the papers which he had crushed in his grasp drop upon the floor.

"I have heard of your illness, Mr. Scarve," replied Abel; "and am come to say a few words to you that must be said while you are able to hear them."

"But you disturb me," rejoined the miser—"you can have nothing to say to me."

"I have something to forgive," returned Abel.

"To forgive!" echoed Scarve vacantly. "How

have I injured you? Ah! now I recollect! I married Arabella Clinton, whom you would willingly have wedded. But she has been dead and gone these seventeen years and more."

"My father is not sufficiently himself to converse with you, Mr. Beechcroft," said Hilda; "but there is one thing I would mention——"

"Not a word about the letter, or the contract!" cried the miser, with sudden fury; "not a word, or I will launch my curse against you—a father's curse—beware how you incur it!"

"What is this?" cried Abel Beechcroft, in astonishment.

"Nothing," cried the miser; "it is a matter between me and my daughter. Get you gone. You have no business here. I can die without your forgiveness."

"Father!" exclaimed Hilda, "I have a duty to others as well as to you. Another opportunity may not occur. I must tell Mr. Beechcroft what I have discovered."

The miser shook his hands at her in impotent fury, and attempted to pronounce the curse; but his utterance failed him, and with a half-articulate cry, he fell senseless to the ground.

Hilda's cries instantly brought Jacob to the room, and the miser was laid upon the bed, where restoratives were successfully employed. Inexpressibly shocked and alarmed by what he had witnessed, Abel Beechcroft took his leave, and Hilda, having picked up the letter and memorandum, and carefully straightened them, put them both into a place of security.

V

*Abel's Conduct on learning the Miser's Illness—
Sir Singleton Spinke proposes to the Fair
Thomasine—Randulph again dines with Lady
Brabazon—He receives a Note from Kitty
Conway, and is assaulted by Philip Frewin
and his Myrmidons on his way to Sup with her.*

ACCOUNTS of Mr. Scarve's state of health had been conveyed to Mrs. Crew by Jacob, who unhesitatingly expressed his conviction that the attack would terminate fatally.

"He may linger for some time," said Jacob; "but I'm certain he'll never be himself again."

This intelligence produced a visible effect on Abel, and Mrs. Crew thought she could discover less asperity in his feelings towards his old enemy. He desired Jacob to inform him daily how his master went on, and to be sure and let him know instantly if any material change for the worse took place.

"I suppose there is nothing I can do for him," he added—"nothing I can send him?"

"Why, he won't take any physic if he knows it," said Jacob; "and as to wine or brandy, there isn't a drop in the house, and hasn't been these four or five days. And we can't send to buy any, for he only gives Miss Hilda the trifle he used to allow for house expenses, and she doesn't like to take any of his money, for fear of angerin' him, for he counts it every day, and would be sure to miss it."

"Take a bottle of wine and another of brandy back with you, Jacob," said Abel.

"Thank'ee, sir—thank'ee!" rejoined Jacob; "it may be the means o' savin' his life. I'll mix a spoonful with his gruel, and I dare say he'll never find it out."

"Is there anything else I can send him?" asked Abel. "My housekeeper would make him broths or jellies. We have more convenience here than you can have."

"And more means 'as well," replied Jacob. "I won't say no, for we really are hardly put to it to treat him as he should be treated. And only think of him rollin' in wealth, and yet denyin' himself the common comforts of existence—the necessaries, I may say, at a time like this. And then to be indebted to you for 'em, sir—you of all the people in the world."

"Take care he never knows it, nor even suspects it," said Abel hastily.

"Never fear, sir," replied Jacob; "he shall learn nothin' from me. But he'll never ask."

"I suppose I cannot be of any assistance to your young lady, Jacob?" said Mrs. Crew.

"I fear not, ma'am," replied Jacob. "My poor young missis has a hard task to go through, but she must fulfil it. And brighter days, I hope, are in store for her."

Abel then rang the bell, and gave instructions to Mr. Jukes, who, taking Jacob to his pantry, brought the wine and brandy his master had ordered, and filled a can with mutton broth for him.

"You shall have some nice chicken broth to-morrow," said the butler, "and, in the meantime, this will be better than nothing."

"I should think so," replied Jacob.

During the few minutes which it had taken the butler to go to the cellar, Jacob had found time to dig deep into a steak pie, and to empty a quart mug of ale; but he now started up, put the brandy into one capacious pocket, and the wine into the other, and taking up the can of broth, set off at his quickest pace to the Little Sanctuary.

He came daily for a fresh supply of broth, which he said, and with perfect truth, was the main support of his master. Abel always saw him for a few minutes when he came, and listened with the greatest interest to his account of the miser's proceedings.

Jacob told him of Diggs' visit, and of his suspicion that he had made his will; and concluded by mentioning the sum of money which the attorney had carried away. This account perplexed and troubled Abel exceedingly, and he muttered—

"I must make some inquiries about Diggs, and try to find out what he does with the money. I hope this wretched old man has not put the crowning act to his folly, and left his property away from his daughter."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Jacob. "But there's no sayin' what he may do. I wish you would see him, sir."

"I would see him if I thought it would do any good," replied Abel; "but I apprehend my interfer-

ence would only be productive of harm. I must see him before all is over. We have an account to settle together."

"Then you'd better not put it off too long," replied Jacob.

Abel, however, could not muster up resolution for the painful scene which he expected to encounter; until one evening, as he was sitting after dinner over his wine, with his sister, Randolph, and Trussell—Jacob, who had been there before in the morning, came to inform him that the miser had been so unwell all day, and so fanciful and light-headed, that if he wished to have any communication with him while he was in his right mind, he had better not postpone his visit.

Abel then decided upon going at once, and accordingly proceeded with Jacob to the Little Sanctuary, where he had the short and painful interview with the miser, detailed in the preceding chapter.

By this time Randolph was able to go abroad. One of his earliest visits was to Sir Norfolk Salusbury, who was delighted to see him, and shook him cordially by the hand, repeating what he had previously stated, that he thought he had conducted himself admirably in the affair of the duel.

Sir Norfolk then began to talk of the miser's illness, and deplored the position of his daughter, adding that he had been several times to call upon him, but had always been denied admittance. While they were thus conversing, Sir Bulkeley Price was announced. Like Sir Norfolk, he appeared greatly

pleased to see Randolph abroad again, and offered his congratulations.

"Villiers was out before you, Mr. Crew," he said. "I had a visit from him yesterday; but he still wears his arm in a sling, probably because he thinks it becoming. He came to entreat me to offer his apologies to Miss Scarve, and to express his compunction for his conduct. He was incited to it, he declares, by the violence of his passion for her; but he is now entirely cured, and is heartily ashamed of his conduct."

"He said as much to me," added Sir Norfolk.

"He also expressed himself most handsomely about you, Mr. Crew," pursued Sir Bulkeley; "and said he was extremely glad the duel had terminated in the way it did. I hope, therefore, you will be better friends than ever."

"We may be better friends, because we shall probably see less of each other," said Randolph, laughing. "However, it is pleasant to have such flattering things said of one by an adversary."

Shortly afterwards, the party left Abingdon Street, and proceeded to the Mall in Saint James's Park, where they met Beau Villiers, Lady Brabazon, and Clementina, together with their constant attendant, Sir Singleton Spinke.

Villiers, whose right arm was sustained by a scarf, immediately held forth his disengaged hand to Randolph, and passed so many encomiums upon his courage and address that the latter must have been made of stubborn material indeed to be insensible to them. His generous nature was sensibly

touched, and he began to think he had done the beau an injustice.

Lady Brabazon, too, exerted her utmost witchery, and told him with a captivating smile, that if he consulted his good looks, he would fight a duel and get wounded once a month, as he now looked handsomer than ever. The interview ended in Randolph accepting an invitation to dine the next day with Lady Brabazon.

Trussell was enchanted. Accident, and a combination of circumstances, had accomplished precisely what he desired. As to Randolph, he was annoyed with himself for having made the engagement; but it was now too late to retract. He felt somewhat embarrassed as to how to communicate the matter to his mother; but Trussell relieved him of the difficulty, and on their return home, gave a lively and diverting account of the meeting in the Park, and said it had led to a reconciliation dinner, which was to take place at Lady Brabazon's on the following day.

"I hope the dinner may not lead to another quarrel," said Abel.

"I hope so, too," replied Mrs. Crew. "I wish you would discontinue your intimacy with Lady Brabazon, Randolph—I cannot endure her."

"I do not intend to continue it to the same extent as before," said Randolph; "but it was impossible to refuse the present invitation."

"Quite impossible!" echoed Trussell—"never was anything so handsome as Villiers' apologies."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Abel; "they are as little to be trusted as himself."

"I don't think so in the present case," said Randolph.

"You may take my word for it, you are deceived," rejoined Abel. And here the conversation dropped.

The next day, soon after five o'clock, Randolph and his uncle crossed from the Palace Stairs to Westminster, and shaped their course towards the Little Sanctuary. Trussell wished to call for a new peruke which he had ordered from Peter Pokerich; and while he stepped into the little barber's to try it on, Randolph proceeded to the other side of the street to make inquiries after the miser and his daughter.

"He's as bad as he can be," said Jacob, who answered his knock, shaking his head; "and I'm afraid this constant watchin' will be too much for Miss Hilda. I want to have a word with you, but I can't stop just now, for I'm wanted. Where shall you be to-night?"

"I'm going to dine with Lady Brabazon, in Pall Mall," replied Randolph. "I shall leave about ten, and will call here on my way home."

"No; I'll step up to her ladyship's at ten," rejoined Jacob; "and I'll wait till you come out. We may have somethin' to do together."

With this, he closed the door, and Randolph walked across the street to Peter Pokerich's. At the same moment, a chair was seen advancing along the street, which stopped at Mr. Deacle's, and being

opened, let forth Sir Singleton Spinke, very gaily dressed, who skipped into the mercer's shop. Having witnessed the old beau's entrance, Randolph turned into the barber's and told his uncle what had occurred.

"Sir Singleton must be gone to pay court to the fair Thomasine," said Trussell, laughing.

On hearing this remark, Peter, without saying a word, darted out of the shop, and hurried to the neighbouring house. Trussell was at first disposed to be angry, but on reflecting on the probable cause of the barber's sudden flight, he burst into a loud laugh.

"Let us go and see what happens," he said, arranging his wig.

The little barber, meanwhile, had entered the mercer's shop. There was no one in attendance in front but an apprentice, who did not notice him. He accordingly stepped lightly and quickly towards the door of the inner room, which was left ajar, enabling him to hear what passed within, while the upper half being glazed, and partly covered by a green silk blind, showed him that the speakers were Sir Singleton and his mistress.

The old beau was on his knees, while the fair Thomasine had abandoned her hand to him, though she averted her looks from him; owing to which circumstance she did not discover the jealous eyes of the barber glaring at her through the window, As to Peter, he tugged at his wig with jealous rage, and would have plucked handfuls of hair from it, if it would have yielded; but, being stoutly made, it resisted his efforts bravely.

"I will not rise till I have a favourable answer, adorable Thomasine!" said Sir Singleton. "Will you be mine?—will you fly with me?"

"I cannot," replied the fair Thomasine, turning round with such suddenness that the little barber had barely time to duck down to escape observation. "I cannot. I have already told you a hundred times, I am engaged to Peter Pokerich."

"I will cut the little rascal's throat!" cried Sir Singleton, rising, and clapping his hand on his sword. "I will belabour him with his own pole."

"No, don't!" said the fair Thomasine—"I should go distracted, like Ophelia, if any harm were to happen to him. Poor Peter is so very fond of me—so very, very fond! At one time he was a little inconstant, to be sure—slightly dazzled by the charms of the miser's lovely daughter. But latterly he has become quite devoted."

"He cannot love you a thousandth part as well as I love you," said the old beau—"it is not in his vulgar nature. Besides, I can make you Lady Spinke—can put you at the head of a splendid establishment—cover you with diamonds—introduce you to the first society—take you every night to some fine lady's drum—to Ranelagh—to Vauxhall—to the playhouses."

"It sounds delightful, indeed!" said the fair Thomasine, whose eyes sparkled at the beau's enumeration of the pleasures he had in store for her. "But will you really make me Lady Spinke?"

"I swear it!" cried the old beau. "Oh! you are mine!—say you are mine!"

"No, you're too old for me!" said the fair Thomasine. "I don't think I could marry you."

The unhappy barber, who had almost sunk into the floor, here revived again.

"Too old," exclaimed Sir Singleton. "Why, I'm in the very prime of life. But, granting that I am old, you'll the sooner be a widow. Lady Spinke, with a large jointure—think of that!"

"A large jointure is very tempting, certainly," said the fair Thomasine musingly.

"You can't hesitate, I am sure, my charmer," cried the old beau, "between the brilliant life I hold out to you, and the wretched one you will be condemned to with your little barber. Give him up at once. Leave him to his wigs, his pomatum, his powder-puff, and his blocks, and let him marry some barmaid or serving-woman, the only creatures fit for him."

"Lady Singleton Spinke and Mrs. Peter Pokerich do sound very differently," said the fair Thomasine. "I should mightily like to be called 'your ladyship.'"

"So would most women, but it isn't every one who has the opportunity," rejoined the old beau.

"But then I must have a fine gilt coach?" pursued the fair Thomasine.

"It is yours," replied Sir Singleton.

"And beautiful dresses?" she continued.

"As many as you like," he answered. "I'll buy your father's whole stock of silks."

"And magnificent diamonds?"

"Equal to a duchess's."

"And I shall go to court?"

"You shall."

"And to Ranelagh, Vauxhall, and the play-houses?"

"As often as you please."

"Well, then, I almost—but oh! dear, it would be so wrong—no, I can't consent. 'Twould break my Peter's heart."

"Peter's heart will soon be mended again," replied Sir Singleton. "I'll have a coach and four at the corner of the street at five o'clock to-morrow morning; and then we'll drive a few miles out of town for an airing, and return to breakfast—and to the Fleet, where we'll be married."

"Don't expect me. I never can make up my mind to so fearful a step," said the fair Thomasine, pathetically, yet undecidedly.

"Well, I shall be there, at all events," said the old beau, pressing her hand to his lips. "Farewell. At five."

The little barber had heard enough. He darted off like a madman, and almost upset Trussell and Randulph, who, as well as himself, had overheard what passed. The next moment, the old beau issued forth, singing a French song, and twirling his cane gaily.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, perceiving Trussell and Randulph, "what the deuce brings you here?"

"We came to look after the little barber, who ran away, leaving my wig only half dressed," replied Trussell. "He has just rushed out of this shop as if he had gone distracted."

"The devil!" exclaimed Sir Singleton; "then he has overheard my plan. I must change it." And stepping back to the fair Thomasine, he whispered, "Peter Pokerich has been playing the spy upon us. He may interfere with our arrangements. To-night at twelve, instead of to-morrow morning at five. Till then, ma belle, adieu!" and kissing his hand to her, he rejoined his friends. "You are both going to Lady Brab's, I suppose?" he said. "Sorry I can't take you—we shall meet again in a few minutes."

So saying, and strutting off triumphantly, he entered his chair, and was conveyed to Lady Brabazon's, where Randolph and his uncle arrived a few minutes after him.

The dinner passed off delightfully. It was a small party, consisting of Sir Bulkeley Price, Sir Norfolk Salusbury, and Lady Fazakerly. Everything was done to please Randolph, and the efforts were perfectly successful. The wine flowed freely after dinner—for it was a hard drinking age—and Randolph, who had been exceedingly temperate since the duel, began to feel the effect of it. As he was about to ascend to the drawing-room with the rest of the gentlemen, a note was handed him by a servant, which he instantly opened.

"What says your billet, nephew?" inquired Trussell, who was standing by.

"Oh! it's from Kitty Conway," said Randolph. "She has found out, I know not how, that I am here, and wishes me to sup with her to-night for the last time."

"And you will go, won't you?" said Trussell.

"Not I," replied Randolph irresolutely.

"Oh yes, you will," said Trussell; "and I'll accompany you on your last visit, as I did on the first."

And they went upstairs laughing to the drawing-room.

Time passed by so fleetly in the fascinating society of Lady Brabazon, that Randolph was surprised, on glancing at his watch, to find it nearly eleven o'clock. "Jacob will be gone," he thought, "and will think I have forgotten him."

Hastily taking leave of Lady Brabazon, who chided him playfully for running away so early, and engaged him to call upon her the following morning, he went downstairs accompanied by Trussell. They found Jacob at the door, and in no very bland humour at having been kept so long.

"My time's more than up," said the latter gruffly, "and I was just goin' away. What I want to say is this—I've received a hint that master's miserly nevy, Philip Frewin, is about to decamp with the money I gave Mr. Diggs t'other day. He's at the Crown Inn, Ox-yard, King Street. Suppose you pay him a visit."

"I'll readily do so to-morrow, Jacob," said Randolph; "but to-night I'm engaged. Come along with me. My way lies in the same direction as yours, and I want to talk to you about your master and young mistress."

Jacob complied, and accompanied Randolph to the corner of Hedge Lane, a narrow thoroughfare

running into Cockspur Street, where he took his leave. Randolph and his uncle then tracked the lane above mentioned, until they came to Whitcomb Street, where Kitty Conway then resided, having removed from the Haymarket to an old house in the latter street, erected three years after the Great Fire of London—namely, 1669.

Never having visited the pretty actress in her new abode, but having been told in the note that this date, which was inscribed in large figures on a shield over the door, would guide him to it, Randolph was looking out for the house, when he observed three men at a little distance behind him, who seemed to be dogging him and his uncle. The foremost was a tall thin man; the second, a stout square-set personage, attired in a shabby military garb; and the third, a great hulking fellow, with an atrociously black muzzle, dressed in a blue jacket, short trousers, and woollen cap.

Randolph could not help fancying he had seen these personages before, though he could not tell where, but he did not concern himself much about them, until just as he had discovered Kitty Conway's dwelling, and was about to knock at the door, he saw that they were quickening their pace towards him. On a nearer approach, he was at no loss to detect Philip Frewin, and, in his companions, Captain Culpepper and the fellow who had officiated as Jack-in-the-water at the Folly on the Thames.

"Here is your man!" shouted Philip, pointing out Randolph to the others. "Upon him! Don't leave an unbroken bone in his body."

Randolph, however, was prepared for the attack. Grasping the stout cane he held in his hand, he dealt Philip so severe a blow on the head with it that he stretched him on his back on the ground. At the same moment, Trussell received a blow from the cudgel of the athletic sailor, which sent him reeling against the door, to the posts of which he clung for support, while the ruffian, turning to assault Randolph, encountered an unexpected adversary in the person of Jacob Post.

"I thought what you were after, you scoundrels, when I saw you doggin' these gen'l'men," cried Jacob; "I'm glad I got up in time. Turn your cudgel this way, you black-muzzled hound! Two can play at your game."

While Jacob and his antagonist rapped away at each other as hard as they could, making the welkin ring with their blows, Randolph turned upon Culpepper, who attempted to draw his sword to assail him, and belaboured him so lustily with his cane, that the latter was soon fain to cry for quarter.

The sound of the cudgels, and the vociferations of the combatants, had alarmed the watch, who sprang their rattles and hastened to the scene of strife, while Kitty Conway, hearing the noise, opened a window above, and seeing what was passing in the street, added her shrieks to the general clamour. Before, however, the watch could come up, Jacob had brought his athletic antagonist to the ground, and Culpepper had taken to his heels without being able to strike a single blow.

VI

By what device Philip Frewin got off; and how Randolph and Trussell were locked up in the Watch-house.

SEEING no chance of escape, Philip Frewin suddenly started to his feet, and running towards the watchman, plucked off his wig to show the extent of the injuries he had received, and charged the others with assaulting him.

"My skull's fractured, I believe," he cried; "and if you hadn't come up, I dare say I should have been killed outright. There," pointing to Randolph, "stands the ruffian who knocked me down."

"You yourself commenced the assault, scoundrel," replied Randolph, stepping forward; "and if you have been severely punished, you have only met with your desert."

"The subterfuge shall not serve your turn, villain," rejoined Philip. "Secure him, watchman. I'll swear he meant to rob and murder me."

"This is a serious charge, sir," said the watchman to Randolph; "and if the gen'l'man persists in it, I must take you in custody. I was in hopes, and so was you, Charley, wasn't you?" he added, appealing to the other watchman, who replied by a confirmatory grunt—"that it was only a bit of a fight between some gentlefolk about a girl, or some trifling matter of the sort, and that it might be set to rights by a bowl of punch among 'emselves, and a crown

or so to us poor fellows. But this is another matter altogether."

"What has been stated is utterly false," replied Randolph. "I was walking quietly along with my relative, who has sustained quite as much personal damage as any one in the fray, when this scoundrel, accompanied by two other ruffians, suddenly attacked me; and if it had not been for the assistance of that stout porter," pointing to Jacob Post, "I might not now be in a condition to give an explanation of the affair."

"The young gen'l'man speaks the truth, watchman," interposed Jacob; "if there's been any robbery and assault intended, it hasn't been on *his* part."

"You won't listen to what the fellow says, watchman!" cried Philip; "he's one of the gang."

"He has a jail-bird look, certainly," said the foremost, holding up his lantern to Jacob's face. "I declare I'm quite perplexed by these contradictory statements, Charley. I s'pose the best plan will be to take 'em all to the watchus?"

"I reckon so, Sam," replied the other.

"I shan't go," cried Jacob gruffly. "What'll become of my poor master, if I don't go home?"

"You hear what he says, watchman?" cried Philip. "He wants to be off. Secure him."

"Ay, ay, never fear!" cried the watchman, throwing himself on Jacob. "Spring the rattle, Charley."

His comrade obeyed, and by this time a little crowd being collected, Jacob was secured, and Randolph surrounded and made prisoner. Trussell having partly recovered from the effects of the

blow, was likewise seized, and the black-muzzled Jack, who appeared much injured, was also lifted up, and supported between two men.

After some further objurgation and discussion, the foremost watchman gave the word to move on, when the door of the house near them opened, and Kitty Conway rushed forth, and made her way through the crowd to Randolph.

"This is all a mistake!" she cried to the watchmen; "you are taking away the wrong persons. This gentleman, Mr. Randolph Crew, was coming to sup with me. I was expecting him, and hearing a noise in the street, opened my window, and witnessed the affray."

"Well, and what did you see, madam—what did you see?" demanded Philip fiercely.

"I saw Randolph Crew knock you down," replied Kitty.

"To be sure," replied Philip; "he *did* knock me down, and would have killed me if he could. This woman's evidence corroborates my statement, watchman."

"But I heard from the shouts that you were the first assailant, Philip," replied Kitty. "Besides, Captain Culpepper was with you—though he was beaten off by Randolph."

"Don't Philip me, ma'am!" cried the other; "I don't know you, and don't desire to know you—neither do I know anything of Captain Culpepper. You want to get off your friend, that's evident—but it won't do. He'll pass the night in the watch-house instead of supping with you. Go on, watchman."

"You are worse even than I thought you, Philip!" cried Kitty, in tones of the strongest contempt.

"I shouldn't mind being locked up in the watch-house," said Jacob; "but what'll my young missis think of it?—what'll become of my poor master? If anythin' happens to him, I shall never forgive myself. I wish somebody would take a message from me to Miss Scarve, in the Little Sanctuary—it would make me more easy."

"I will take it," said Kitty; "and will explain all."

"You!" exclaimed Jacob. "No; that'll never do." But before he could get out the latter part of his speech, Kitty had retired, and he was forced away by his captors. The party took the direction of Piccadilly, Philip Frewin walking by the side of Sam, the foremost watchman, who kept fast hold of his arm, and the others following.

As they drew near the top of the Haymarket, Philip said in a low tone to the watchman—

"You'll make more out of this job by letting me go, than by detaining me."

"Which way?" asked Sam, in the same tone.

"Here are five guineas," replied Philip, slipping a purse into the other's hand; "contrive my escape, and that of the black-muzzled fellow in the sailor's dress."

Sam held the money to the light, and saw that it was all right.

"I'll manage it," he said. "So the charge you preferred against them t'others was all gammon, eh?"

"To be sure," replied Philip; "but keep them

safely under lock and key till to-morrow morning, and I'll double what I've just given you. You'll find me on this spot to-morrow night at ten."

"That'll do," replied Sam. "And here we're at the top o' the Haymarket. Give me a push, and then make off as fast as you can. I'll take care of the rest. Your black-muzzled friend shall get his liberty by-and-by."

Philip obeyed these instructions to the letter. Turning suddenly upon the watchman, and thrusting him forcibly backwards, he set off as fast as his legs could carry him. Sam instantly started in pursuit, calling loudly to his brethren to take care of the other prisoners; but he returned a few minutes afterwards, out of breath, and swearing that the fellow had managed to get off.

Feigning to be in a very ill-humour, he returned a surly reply to Randolph's remarks on his carelessness, and hurried the prisoners along until they reached Air Street, where the watch-house was situated.

The door was instantly opened by a constable, with whom Sam exchanged a few words in an undertone; after which the prisoners were led down a narrow dirty passage, and thrust into a filthy-looking hole, furnished only with a couple of benches, on which some half-dozen persons of very equivocal appearance were seated. Sam then, for the first time, appeared to notice the absence of the black-muzzled Jack, and inquiring where he was, was told that he had also contrived to escape.

"Escaped, has he!" cried Sam, affecting to be in a great passion. "Odds-my-life! they slip out of one's fingers like eels. However, these three are safe enough, that's some comfort."

"If our accuser is gone," cried Randolph, looking round the chamber with inexpressible disgust, "why are we detained?"

"You're detained on a serious charge," replied Sam; "and I can't take upon me to let you go. But I'll fetch Mr. Foggo, the constable, and if he likes to liberate you, that'll be his concern."

So saying, he went forth with his comrades, locking the door after him.

"An agreeable situation, uncle," said Randolph to Trussell, who had seated himself on the extremity of one of the benches.

"Agreeable indeed!" echoed Trussell, with a groan. "Oh, my poor head!"

"What 'ud my dear young missis, or your good mother, think of us, if they could see us in this place, and with this company!" whispered Jacob. "I'd rather have got a cracked crown myself than Mrs. Conway should call on Miss Hilda."

"So would I," rejoined Randolph.

"Come, come, no grumbling," cried Trussell, rousing himself. "I'm the greatest sufferer, after all. Everything will be set right in the morning, and in the meantime, let's pass the night as comfortably as we can. It's not the first time I've been in a watch-house. Depend upon it, we shan't be liberated; but I'll engage to say we can get a better room than this."

And so it turned out. In about ten minutes Sam made his appearance, with Mr. Foggo, who said he could not discharge the prisoners till they had been before a magistrate.

"Can't you give us a little better accommodation, Mr. Foggo?" asked Trussell, slipping a guinea into his hand.

The constable said nothing, but took them into a back room, furnished with a small deal table, and three or four rush-bottomed chairs.

"This is a parlour after my poor master's own heart," said Jacob, looking at the bare walls and grated windows.

"Anything I can get for you, gen'l'men?" asked the constable, as he set a light on the table.

"I suppose we *must* stay here all night, Mr. Foggo?" observed Trussell. "We're family men—and our ladies will be excessively distressed at our absence."

"Sorry for it, sir, but you must stay," replied the constable. "If you desire it, I dare say I can so manage it that you shan't come before his worship. And in the meantime, though it's against rules—but I don't mind obliging gentlemen—if, I say, a bowl of punch would be agreeable——"

"A bowl of punch, by all means!" cried Trussell; "here's money for it," he added, giving him another guinea.

"I see you understand our ways, sir," said the constable, bowing. And he left the room.

"Come, don't be downcast, my boy!" cried Trussell, clapping his nephew on the shoulder; "we

shall have a jolly night of it, after all. My head is getting better every minute. If Hilda and your mother do hear of your adventure, they'll only laugh at it. I've been locked up a dozen times or more in my younger days, and hope I shall be again. So cheer up, my boy. Your initiation into life would have been incomplete without this occurrence."

Randulph could not help responding to his uncle's laugh, and Mr. Foggo shortly after appearing with a bowl of excellent punch, he began to think that the best way was to make himself comfortable.

Jacob, too, yielded to the genial influence of the liquor, and ere long they were all laughing as merrily as if they had been at large. The bowl of punch discussed, Trussell disposed himself to slumber in his chair; Jacob stretched himself at full length on the floor; and Randulph, having paced the chamber for some time, dropped asleep likewise.

VII

Kitty Conway and the Little Barber play a Trick upon the Fair Thomasine—Sir Singleton Spinke is deluded into a Marriage with the Pretty Actress at the Fleet.

KITTY CONWAY was as good as her word. Scarcely had the watchmen departed with their prisoners than she set out for the Little Sanctuary. With a beating heart, and trembling hand, she knocked at the miser's door; but her summons remained un-

answered, and she was about to repeat it, when a little man crossed the street, and addressed her.

"Mr. Scarve is very ill, ma'am," said the little man—"dangerously ill."

"So I've heard," replied Kitty. "I wish I could make them hear," she added, knocking again, and waiting vainly for an answer.

"I fear you've come on a fruitless errand," said the little man, who still remained standing near her; "the porter is from home."

"I know it—I know it," replied Kitty hastily. "He has been taken to the watch-house. I want to see Miss Scarve, to tell her so."

"What!" exclaimed the other, starting. "Jacob Post taken to the watch-house? This is an extraordinary event. 'Would," he added, with a groan, "that another person I could mention were taken there, too!"

"And pray who may be the person implied by your amiable wish?" asked Kitty.

"Sir Singleton Spinke," replied the little man. "Do you know him, ma'am?"

"Perfectly well," replied Kitty.

"Then you don't require to be told what a dreadful old rake he is," replied the other; "nor will you wonder at my resentment against him, when I tell you he has attempted to run away with my betrothed."

"Your betrothed!" exclaimed Kitty. "Pray what is her name?"

"She is generally denominated the fair Thomasine," replied the other; "but perhaps I ought to call her Miss Deacle."

"Ah! then I know who you are, my little friend," rejoined Kitty; "you are Peter Pokerich, the barber."

"Right, madam," he replied, "I am that unfortunate individual."

"And how does Sir Singleton mean to rob you of your mistress?—let me hear," asked Kitty.

"He has made her an offer of marriage," replied Peter, "and she has accepted him—perfidious that she is! I asked her to sup with me to-night, for the last time, that I might have an opportunity of upbraiding her, and she has accepted the invitation. I'm waiting for her now, for she can't get out till the old people go to bed."

As he spoke, the mercer's door opened, and a female figure issued from it.

"There she is, I declare!" cried the little barber. "I'm so angry with her for her treachery, that I could almost kill her."

"Don't think of such nonsense," replied Kitty. "If you want to revenge yourself, I'll tell you how to do it. Pretend to make love to me."

"That's easily done," replied the barber. "Permit me to take your hand. I'll affect not to see the deceitful little hussy. Let me entreat you, madam," he added, putting on an impassioned air, "to come in with me. We can converse so much more pleasantly than in the street. Somebody may overhear us."

"Somebody *does* overhear you, you little wretch!" cried the fair Thomasine, stopping. "Good gracious! if he isn't making love to the woman. I wonder who she can be."

"She sees us," whispered Kitty, "the plan will do. I'll feign reluctance. Oh, no, I can't go in with you," she added irresolutely.

"I beseech you, do," replied Peter. "I expect a visit from a neighbour—Miss Thomasine Deacle, and I've prepared a little supper for her; but I won't wait."

"And so you want me to take her place!" cried Kitty. "Very flattering, indeed! I dare say you'll try to persuade me next that you prefer me to her."

"So I do!" cried Peter; "I prefer you incomparably. You're a thousand times prettier than she is."

"I shall burst with rage!" cried the fair Thomasine. "I could tear his disagreeable little eyes out."

"Well, since you're so pressing, I'll just go in for a moment," said Kitty; "but I won't sit down—and as to supper——"

"You'll just eat a mouthful," replied Peter.

"Oh, I've no doubt she'll enjoy herself nicely!" said the fair Thomasine; "but I'll spoil their pastime—that I will!"

"This way, madam!" cried Peter, handing the pretty actress towards his dwelling.

"She's close behind us!" whispered Kitty; "contribute to let her get in without observation."

Peter signified his assent in a whisper, and pretending to offer the most gallant attentions to the actress, left the door purposely open.

Unconscious of the trick practised upon her, the fair Thomasine slipped in after them, and hid herself behind a large wooden case, on which several wig blocks were set.

Having caught a glimpse of what had occurred, Kitty squeezed Peter's hand to let him know how matters stood, and he immediately took the hint.

"I declare I've left the door open," he said, locking it; "how excessively careless in me! The fair Thomasine might get in and surprise us."

"She has been beforehand with you, sir," muttered the young lady alluded to, looking up for an instant from behind the case.

"And now, ma'am," said Peter, lighting a couple of candles, and placing them on the table, on which cold chickens and other viands were laid, "you'll take a little supper with me?"

"Well, it looks so nice that it almost tempts me," said Kitty, seating herself. "I think I could manage the wing of a chicken."

Having helped her as she required, Peter ran to a cupboard and brought out a bottle of wine.

"This is some delicious Constantia which I got for the fair Thomasine," he said, pouring out a glass; "but I'm glad you'll drink it instead of her."

"Here's to our absent friends," said Kitty, taking the glass.

"I pledge you," rejoined the little barber; "though I should be sorry to change my present friend for any absent one."

"Oh, the horrid, deceitful little monster!" cried the fair Thomasine. "He was never half so gallant to me."

"By-the-bye, ma'am," said Peter, "your beauty has so fascinated me, that I've omitted to ask your name?"

"It is Kitty Conway," replied the lady.

"What, Mrs. Conway, the pretty actress of the Haymarket?" cried Peter.

"The same," she replied. "And so, old Sir Singleton Spinke is about to take Miss Deacle off your hands, eh?"

"I believe so," replied Peter; "and I wish him joy of his bargain—ha! ha! and her of hers too! She won't know a day's happiness after she becomes Lady Spinke. Now, I should have made her a good husband—a really good husband—for I was devotedly attached to her. But some people don't know what's good for them. However, I'm delighted things have turned out in this way—I've made a capital change. Here's to our better acquaintance," he added, filling the glasses again.

"The amorous little wretch will get tipsy, and propose to her, I expect," said the fair Thomasine.

"Sir Singleton Spinke, as I told you, is an old friend of mine," said Kitty Conway; "he paid me great attention, and, if I had chosen, I might have been Lady Spinke; but I knew better—ha! ha!"

"I hope your objection was to Sir Singleton, and not to the married state," said Peter. "You're not sworn to single blessedness, I trust?"

"I have never given the matter serious consideration," replied the actress.

"Then do so now," replied Peter, stepping forward and throwing himself at her feet; "oh! be mine! be mine! sweet Kitty! I've no gilt coach to offer you, like Sir Singleton—no beautiful dresses, no magnificent diamonds. I can't take you to

court in the morning, and to Ranelagh, Vauxhall, or some fine lady's drum in the evening. I've no temptations to hold out. But I *can* offer you sincere affection—a comfortable home—and a young husband! Yes, a young husband! I'm not a battered old beau—but a smart, dapper little fellow, of two-and-twenty, well worth any woman's notice. If that don't sting her, I've done," he added in a lower tone.

"You certainly appear very amiable," said Kitty, with difficulty keeping her countenance, "and though small, are reasonably good-looking."

"Answer me," cried the little barber passionately—"or let me snatch a reply from your honeyed lips."

"I can stand this no longer," cried the fair Thomasine. And bursting from her concealment, she ran up to Peter, and boxed his ears soundly.

"There! take that—and that!" she cried. "That'll teach you to make love to other ladies before my eyes."

"Holloa, madam! what do you mean by this?" cried Peter, rubbing his cheek. "How the deuce did you get into the room?—through the keyhole?"

"No matter how I got in," replied the fair Thomasine. "I've seen all that has passed, and heard all you've said. I'm astonished at you, Peter. How can you look me in the face after the shocking things you've said of me behind my back? But don't think I mind them, any more than the loss of your affection. I shan't bestow another thought upon you. As to you, madam——"

"Well, madam!" exclaimed Kitty calmly.

"May you be happy with him—that's all I have to say," continued the fair Thomasine hysterically. "May you love him as much as I could have loved him; and may you never repent interfering with the happiness of another."

"Come, I like this, Miss Thomasine," said Peter. "It's very well for you to talk of interfering with the happiness of another, but didn't I see you listening to the addresses of that odious old beau—didn't I see him kiss your hand—didn't I hear and see all this? Answer me that."

"I will not deny that I was foolish enough to listen to Sir Singleton's addresses," replied the fair Thomasine, with dignity, "for the strongest of our sex is not proof against vanity. But I never assented to his proposal; or, if I did so, it was only pretence."

"Oh, say that again, dearest Tommy—say it again!" cried Peter delightedly.

"It was all pretence—I never meant to marry him!" repeated the fair Thomasine.

"You make me the happiest of barbers!" cried Peter, catching her in his arms, and pressing her to his bosom.

"Mercy on us! what's this?" exclaimed the fair Thomasine, extricating herself from his embrace, and assuming a cold demeanour. "I thought you preferred this lady to me?"

"That was all a pretence, too," replied Peter. "The trick has succeeded to a miracle. We both of us knew you were behind that case."

"Ah! if I had only been aware of that!" cried the fair Thomasine.

"It's very well you were not, in my opinion, Miss Deacle," said Kitty Conway. "I here restore you your lover, and assure you I never had a wish to rob you of him. And now, won't you sit down to supper with us?"

Peter instantly set a chair for her, placed the wing of a chicken on her plate, poured out a glass of Constantia, and the party were soon as merry as possible. During a pause in the conversation, they heard a watchman go past, and cry the hour.

"Three quarters past eleven," said the fair Thomasine; "the old beau promised to come for me at twelve."

"I thought it was six o'clock to-morrow morning!" said Peter.

"No, twelve to-night," replied the fair Thomasine. "Finding you had overheard him, he altered the time. We were to be married at the Fleet."

"It's a pity to disappoint him," observed Kitty laughingly.

"How?" exclaimed Peter and the fair Thomasine simultaneously.

"He ought to have a wife, since he has made up his mind to commit the rash act of matrimony," rejoined Kitty. "A plan just occurs to me. I'll take your place, Miss Deacle—that is, I'll disguise myself like you—conceal my features in a mask, and he'll never know the difference."

"Capital!" exclaimed Peter; "that will be turning the tables upon him with a vengeance."

"I'll lend you my columbine's dress," said the fair Thomasine; "it will just fit you—and my mask. Come with me. You haven't a moment to spare."

"The quicker the better," said Kitty; "for if I give myself time for reflection, I shan't do it."

They then hurried away, and Peter, having helped himself to another glass of Constantia, and put out the candles, followed them, and concealed himself in an alley near the mercer's dwelling, where he could see, unobserved, all that passed.

Punctually as the Abbey clock struck twelve, the sound of wheels was heard—a carriage drew up at the corner, and the next moment the old beau was seen cautiously advancing on the opposite side of the street. Finding the coast clear, he advanced towards the mercer's door, and tapped against it. It was partially opened, and a low voice inquired from within—

"Is it you?"

"Yes, it's me, my angel," replied the old beau; "Sir Singleton Spinke—your devoted admirer!"

"I'm quite ready," replied the speaker, stepping forth, and looking exactly like the fair Thomasine dressed for the masquerade at Ranelagh.

"Why, you've got on your columbine's dress," said Sir Singleton approvingly.

"It's the prettiest I have," replied the lady; "and I thought you would like me better in it than in any other."

"You couldn't have made a better choice," replied the old beau; "in fact, you couldn't choose amiss. But why that envious mask?"

"I put it on to hide my blushes," replied the other; "nor shall I remove it till we are united. But you must drive to the Fleet at once—I'll go nowhere else."

"I don't desire you to do so, my angel," replied the old beau; "the parson is in attendance, and in less than half-an-hour we shall be man and wife."

"Have you no scruple in taking me from poor Peter Pokerich?" said the lady.

"None whatever," replied the old beau. "I wish the little perruquier could be present at our marriage—it would complete his mortification."

"Well, there's no saying what may happen," replied the other significantly; "but we've stood chattering here long enough, and may be observed."

With this she gave her hand to her admirer, who led her to the carriage, which was instantly afterwards heard to drive off.

At the same moment, the barber issued from his hiding-place, while the mercer's door opened, and the fair Thomasine came forth.

"Are they gone?" she asked.

"Yes, they're off to the Fleet," replied Peter. "Kitty Conway gave me a hint to follow them, and see the marriage performed. Will you go?"

"Willingly," replied the fair Thomasine.

And hurrying off to the stairs near Westminster Bridge, they took a boat, and ordered the waterman to row as quickly as he could to Blackfriars Stairs. Luckily the tide was in their favour, so that the transit was quickly accomplished.

Meanwhile, the carriage containing the old beau and the actress rolled rapidly along the Strand and Fleet Street, and drew up before a mean-looking house near the prison. A lamp threw a faint glimmer upon a sign over the door, displaying two hands joined together, with the words—"MARRIAGES PERFORMED HERE," inscribed beneath it. Some chairmen and link-boys were standing at the door, but they were pushed aside by the old beau's footman.

As Sir Singleton alighted, a short, stout, red-faced man in a clerical garb, issued forth. This was Doctor Gaynam, the most noted of the Fleet parsons. He wore a rusty cassock and full-bottomed wig, filled with flour, instead of powder, which contrasted strongly with his purple blotchy face, and nose studded with carbuncles.

"This way—this way, my handsome gentleman and fair lady," said Doctor Gaynam, repeating his customary formula, and leading the pair down a passage in which there was a glass door, giving a view of two or three wedding parties, drinking and dancing. "We are ready for you," he added, opening a door, and ushering them into a small back room, where there were two other persons, who turned out to be the clerk and the register. The latter was seated at a desk, and had a large book, like a ledger, before him.

"As you may not perhaps be aware of the practice here, sir," said Doctor Gaynam to Sir Singleton, "I will take the liberty to inform you of it. Our rule is always to take the fees beforehand, to prevent

misunderstanding — merely to prevent misunderstanding, sir."

The old beau immediately produced his purse, and gave five guineas to the clergyman, a couple to the register, and one to the clerk. This liberality produced a corresponding effect upon the parties.

"I have the honour to see Sir Singleton Spinke, sir, I believe," said the register. "Is that the name you desire to be married by?" he added significantly.

"Certainly," said the old beau; "and the name of the lady is——"

"The name *I* wish to be married by is written down on this paper," said Kitty, in a low tone, delivering a leaf torn from her tablets to the register.

"Ah, the dear, sly rogue!" cried Sir Singleton, squeezing her hand.

Doctor Gaynam then placed the parties on either side of him, and commenced reading the service. The register gave the lady away, and at the same time placed the slip of paper before the clergyman, who, proceeding with the ceremony, gave out the lady's name as Kitty—an appellation which somewhat astounded the old beau. He, however, repeated the words after the doctor, and so did the lady, and in due time the marriage was completed.

Just as the ring was placed on the bride's finger, two other persons entered the room; but as they kept near the door, and as Doctor Gaynam supposed them to be another couple waiting their turn to be united, no notice was taken of them. But when all was over, these two persons advanced, and proved

to be no other than Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine.

"Why, what in the name of wonder is this?" cried the old beau, staring in astonishment. "The likeness is marvellous. Are there two fair Thomasines? But no—it can't be. Who the deuce have I married?"

"You shall see," replied the bride, unmasking.

"Kitty Conway!" exclaimed Sir Singleton.

"Yes, Kitty Conway is the name her ladyship was married by," said the register. "I've just entered it in the book."

"We've come to offer you our best congratulations, Sir Singleton," said Peter.

"And to wish you many years of happiness," added the fair Thomasine.

"Well, I'm nicely tricked, indeed," cried the old beau. "Egad," he added, gazing at the bride, who really looked very beautiful, "I don't know but what I've the best of the bargain, after all. Kitty is decidedly the smarter and prettier of the two, and if she *has* flirted a little, I don't mind it. Lady Singleton Spinke," he said, giving her his hand, "our carriage awaits us. I know nothing of these persons," pointing to Peter and the fair Thomasine. "Mr. Register, will you have the goodness to tell my servants to drive home—to Pall Mall?"

Lady Spinke waved her hand kindly to the barber and his companion, who watched her enter the carriage, and drive off.

"Upon my word, I begin to think I've thrown a good chance away," observed the fair Thomasine, with something like a sigh.

"Oh! don't say so, my darling," cried Peter; "there's no security in a Fleet marriage. It may be set aside in a month."

"Now, my handsome couple," cried Doctor Gaynam, who had followed them to the door, "don't you want the parson!—won't you step in and be married? The fees will be only twelve shillings to you—one shilling the clerk, and one the register."

"What say you, sweetest," said Peter—"shall we be for ever united?"

"For ever!" echoed the fair Thomasine. "Why, you've just said that a Fleet marriage can be set aside in a month. No, I thank you. If I'm married at all—especially to a barber—I'll be married properly. Take me back to the Little Sanctuary directly."

VIII

Of the Visit of Philip Frewin and Diggs to the Miser, and what they obtained from him.

HAVING made his escape from the watchmen, as before related, Philip Frewin ran on, without stopping, past Charing Cross and Whitehall, until he reached King Street, when he relaxed his pace. He then struck into Ox Yard and entered the Crown Inn, within it, pushing past the waiter, who stared aghast at his blood-stained appearance—though broken pates were matters of common occurrence in those days, as may be seen from Hogarth's

prints—and made his way to a room where he found Diggs seated at a table, with glasses and a bowl of punch before him. The attorney had been asleep, but he roused himself on Philip's entrance.

"Why, you appear to have come off the worst in this encounter?" he said, looking at him. "I was afraid it would be so."

"Ay, devil take it!" exclaimed Philip. "He's a more desperate fellow than I thought him. We should have done well enough but for Jacob Post."

"Jacob Post," repeated Diggs—"how came he there?"

Philip told him what had occurred.

"Well, I thought it an ill-advised proceeding from the first," said Diggs, as the other concluded his recital. "I wish you hadn't chanced to hear he was going to sup with Kitty Conway. This would never have happened!"

"Curse him!" cried Philip furiously. "He has robbed me of two mistresses and a fortune, and I'll be revenged on him—deeply revenged!—I swear it!"

"It is vexatious," replied Diggs coolly, "and he has crossed your path somewhat unluckily. Still, as far as Kitty Conway is concerned, I think he did you a service in taking her off your hands. But, I repeat, I am sorry you meddled with him to-night. You've enough to do just now without thinking of revenge, and the greatest triumph you can have over him will be to get as much as possible from your uncle Scarve, and thereby reduce Hilda's

THE WISE'S DAUGHTER

... my darling," cried Peter; "And his days are numbered!" Fleet marriage. It may

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... somewhat sharply; "because I am th chief sufferer by your extravagance. You hav- Why, been a profligate and a gambler; and are now little be set better than a sharper. I have lost some thousands a mar- by you, and I must and will be repaid!" replied Philip, in married

"You shall be repaid, Diggs," replied Philip, in a deprecatory tone.

"But how!—and when!" thundered the attorney —"how, and when, sir!—answer me that!" Philip was silent.

"You can have the five thousand pounds from my uncle," he said at length.

"That is gone," replied the attorney. "Gone!" cried Philip—

"I have found a better place the money in my hands."

"I have found a better place the money in my hands," and during your absence Philip uttered a

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prints—and made money would be employed for that he found Diggs gave him a memorandum that if it and a bowl of he should receive double the amount. had been safe, I am all right; and to be plain with you, entrance. I meant you to have the money."

"Why, you are a consummate scoundrel, Diggs, and this one tricked me most infamously," said Philip afraidly.

"No such thing," replied Diggs.

"I say you have," cried Philip. "I have wasted my property, it is true; but you have helped me to do so by your extortionate demands. You have raised me at such usurious interest, that you have enriched yourself, for my share of the spoil." Diggs, leaning back in his chair, laughed merrily. "I am striding up at," cried Philip, "leave off

Diggs, "you'll gain but nothing." "They suddenly come," he said, "to the attorney; "for they will surprise that my father died and he assigned his property to Philip. "I am," cried Diggs, "principal creditor

was a person named Isaacs, a Jew, who had advanced the money at most usurious interest."

"As you have done to me," observed Philip. "The man who gets into such hands is sure to be ruined."

"Cunning as he was," pursued Diggs, without noticing the remark, "Isaacs got into difficulties, and assigned his securities to his chief creditor, Mr. Nettleship, a tallow-chandler in the city, who died about six months ago, and whose affairs proving greatly embarrassed, the arrangement of them was committed to me by his surviving partner, Mr. Rathbone. On examining the claims on the Crew estate, I found they could not be legally substantiated, and, therefore, instead of being worth sixty thousand pounds, as he imagined, the securities are not worth a twentieth part of that amount. These facts being made known to the agent of the Jacobite party, who is, as I have stated, a client of mine, he wished to get these papers into his hands, and Mr. Scarve's money has been appropriated to their purchase."

"The devil it has!" exclaimed Philip; "and what use does the agent intend to make of them?"

"He means to give Randolph back his property, provided he joins the Jacobite cause," replied the attorney, "but on no other condition. And in my opinion it will never be fulfilled. But what is more, your uncle Scarve is bound under a heavy penalty to give his daughter to Randolph Crew. But neither will this be accomplished, unless the young man turns Jacobite."

"And what is all this to me?" cried Philip.
"Or, rather, what am I to gain by it?"

"That depends upon yourself," replied Diggs.
"It is plain you can never marry your cousin Hilda; and it is plain also, that if Randolph turns Jacobite he will marry her, and obtain her property and his own. You have therefore no hope but in persuading your uncle to make you his heir."

"And do you think that can be accomplished?" asked Philip eagerly.

"I think it may be," replied the attorney; "and, if attempted, no time should be lost."

"Why not make the experiment to-night?" said Philip. "Jacob is out of the way."

"That is something, certainly," replied the attorney; "but the hour is late."

"There is no telling what may happen to-morrow," said Philip. "We can but fail."

After a little consideration, Diggs assented; and Philip, retiring to an inner room, washed the sanguine stains from his face, mended his broken pate with a patch, and covered all with an old scratch wig.

He then put on the tattered garb he was accustomed to wear on his visits to his uncle, and returning to Diggs, they quitted the inn by a private door, and proceeded to the Little Sanctuary. Knocking loudly, they were answered by Mrs. Clinton, who seemed greatly surprised, and by no means pleased, to see them.

Diggs told her he had business with Mr. Scarve that could not be delayed, and pushing past her,

walked down the passage towards the parlour, followed by Philip, where they found Hilda.

She had been seated at the table, reading that sacred volume which exercises the most soothing influence on the mind in seasons of trouble, but she arose on hearing their approach. Diggs repeated what he had stated to Mrs. Clinton, and asked permission to walk upstairs to the miser's room.

"Your business must be important if it cannot be postponed till to-morrow," said Hilda.

"It cannot be postponed, Miss Scarve," replied the attorney; "in your father's present state of health, delays might be dangerous, and the urgency of the case must plead my excuse."

"Well, sir, if you are resolved to see him," replied Hilda, "you will find him in his own room. He is not gone to bed. You know your way."

"I do," replied the attorney, going towards the stairs.

"You need not expect Jacob Post home to-night, Hilda," observed Philip Frewin; "he has got shut up in the watch-house for assisting Randolph Crew in a street disturbance. I saw them taken off myself."

And chuckling at the alarm produced by this intelligence, he followed the attorney upstairs.

The miser was seated in his easy-chair, near the fire; his knees almost thrust into the scantily supplied grate; and his skinny hands extended over the flame. A farthing candle was burning on the table. On hearing the door open, he cried, without looking round, in a querulous tone—

"So you've come at last, Jacob, have you? Where have you been, rascal? You've kept me up very late, for I couldn't go to bed till you came home. I'll not leave you a farthing in my will if you serve me such a trick again—not a farthing!"

"It's not Jacob, sir," said the attorney, advancing—"it's me—Mr. Diggs."

"Diggs!" exclaimed the miser, looking round. "What brings you here at this time of night?—who have you got with you?"

"Your nephew, sir—Mr. Philip Frewin," replied the attorney. "I come at rather an unseasonable hour, sir; but I thought it better not to delay my visit."

"You think me in danger, Diggs—I know you do—and that's the reason of your coming," said the miser. "Everybody fancies I'm going to die—even Abel Beechcroft paid me a visit the t'other night to tell me so. But though I'm ill enough, God knows, it's not all over with me yet. I may come round, Diggs—may come round. But to your business?"

"My business relates to your nephew, Mr. Scarve," said the attorney. "I know you are much too strong-minded to fear the approach of death, and, though I trust my apprehensions may prove groundless, I hold it my duty to tell you that I consider your condition precarious. You may get better——"

"But the probability is I shall not!" interrupted the miser, with a ghastly grin; "that's what you mean to say, sir. Go on."

"I wish to know your sentiments in reference to

the proposed alliance between Mr. Frewin and your daughter," pursued the attorney. "If anything should happen to you, is it your wish that she should marry him or Randolph Crew?"

"She shall never marry the latter!" shrieked the miser; "I'll disinherit her rather."

"Leave your property away from her, if she disobeys your injunctions and weds him—that will answer the purpose," said Diggs.

"I will—I will," rejoined the miser; "and what is more, I will leave it from her if she does not marry Philip Frewin."

"If such is your intention, the will had better be drawn up at once," said the attorney. "I will get writing materials and prepare it."

The miser assented, and turned his head thoughtfully towards the fire, while Diggs took up the candle and went downstairs for pen and ink.

Though longing to address his uncle, Philip did not dare to do so, for fear of disturbing the present favourable position of things. The next moment Diggs returned, and sitting down at the table, commenced drawing up the will.

The miser watched the progress of his rapid pen in silent curiosity, and Philip Frewin did his best to hide the intense interest he took in the proceedings. At length, the attorney completed his task, and having glanced it over, turned to the miser, and commenced reading it to him. The effect of the instrument, which was most strongly worded, was to place Hilda completely in the power of Philip Frewin.

"It's just what I wished," said the miser, as Diggs finished; "I'll sign it."

As he tottered to the table, and sat down in the seat relinquished to him by Diggs, who placed the will before him, and a pen in his trembling fingers, the door opened, and Hilda entered the room. Though greatly startled by her appearance at this critical juncture, the attorney commanded himself as well as he could, and said hastily to the miser—

"Sign it, sir—sign it."

But the latter would not be deprived of his triumph. He looked up at his daughter, and said—

"I'm about to put an effectual bar to your marriage with Randolph Crew."

"And do you forget your solemn contract with his father?" she rejoined. "Will not you fulfil that?"

"That contract is little better than a moral obligation upon Mr. Scarve," said Diggs. "It is doubtful whether it is binding upon him, and it certainly cannot be enforced upon his representatives."

"Spoken like an honest man, sir, I must say," replied Hilda contemptuously. "Father," she added, stepping forward, and laying her hand upon the will, "I beseech you not to sign this paper. You are not sufficiently yourself to do so, and it is infamous in Mr. Diggs to practise on you thus. Keep it by you, and sign it if you will, when you have well considered it. But not now—not now."

"You think me worse than I am, Hilda," said the miser, regarding her fixedly; "but I will unde-

fortune, for, take my word Darling," cried Peter; him when the old man dies." Marriage. It may

"And his days are numbered?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Diggs. "A Doctor Gay—you had but played your cards well, what, "don't might be yours! It would have repaired, and be folly and extravagance."

"Come, come, Diggs, no preaching," said the angrily. "What is past is past."

"But I *will* preach, as you call it," cried the attorney, somewhat sharply; "because I am the chief sufferer by your extravagance. You have been a profligate and a gambler; and are now little better than a sharper. I have lost some thousands by you, and I must and will be repaid!"

"You shall be repaid, Diggs," replied Philip, in a deprecatory tone.

"But how?—and when?" thundered the attorney—"how, and when, sir?—answer me that!"

Philip was silent.

"You can have the five thousand pounds you got from my uncle," he said at length.

"That is gone," replied the attorney.

"Gone!" cried Philip—"why, you offered to place the money in my hands yourself!"

"I have found a better use for it," said Diggs; "and during your absence it has been removed."

Philip uttered a deep imprecation.

"I'll tell you what I've done with it," said Diggs; "I've given it to a most important client of mine—an agent for the Jacobite party, to whose use it will be applied. Your uncle Scarve is a Jacobite, and I

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"I say you have," cried Philip. "I have wasted my property, it is true; but you have helped me to do so by your extortionate demands. You have raised money for me at such usurious interest, that you have beggared me while enriching yourself, for I know you've come in for your share of the spoil."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Diggs, leaning back in his chair, and indulging in a loud fit of merriment.

"I'll not be laughed at," cried Philip, striding up to him, and shaking his hand in his face; "leave off—or I'll make you."

"Sit down," said Diggs calmly; "you'll gain nothing by passion, but may by quietude."

Accustomed to obey him, Philip suddenly complied.

"Now listen to me," pursued the attorney; "for I've a good deal to tell you, and that will surprise you. You know that Randolph Crew's father died greatly embarrassed, and that Randolph assigned his estates to the creditors."

"Well, what of that?" asked Philip.

"You shall hear, if you're quiet," cried Diggs, "but not otherwise. Mr. Crew's principal creditor

gust, he followed Diggs downstairs, and they made the best of their way out of the house, congratulating each other on the complete success of their infamous scheme.

IX

Mr. Rathbone divulges his Plan to Mrs. Nettleship, and persuades her to act in concert with him in his Designs upon the Valet.

MR. CRIPPS' plan of inveigling Mr. Rathbone into consenting to his marriage with the widow threatened to be defeated by the precipitation of the lady herself, who, now that she had made up her mind to it, declaimed strongly against the delay, and began to tax him with cooling in his ardour towards her. The valet protested to the contrary; but all would not do, and he began to fear he should be compelled to sacrifice the three thousand pounds, which went very much against his inclinations.

Luckily, while he was in this dilemma, the duel occurred between his master and Randolph, and the wound which the latter had received immediately furnished him with a pretext for absenting himself until he should have time to mature his plans. He felt too secure of his prize to be under any apprehension of being supplanted by Mr. Rathbone.

Accordingly, he despatched Antoine, the French valet, who was in his confidence, and to whom he had promised a very handsome reward, in case of

his success, to the widow with a message, stating that he had been wounded in a duel, and could not leave his room for some days, but as soon as he could get out he would pay her a visit.

On receiving this distressing intelligence, Mrs. Nettleship uttered a scream, and fell back on her chair, and it required the combined assistance of Antoine and Mr. Rathbone, who chanced to be present, with abundance of *rosa solis* and *ratafia*, to bring her to herself.

"And where is the dear man wounded?" asked Mrs. Nettleship faintly.

"*Dans le bras*—in de arm, madame," replied Antoine. "*Mais pas dangereusement*—not severely, madame. You shall see him again, *et de bonne heure—sur ma foi*. My master sends his love to you, and bids me say his wound is not so deep as that you have inflicted on him."

"The dear soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Nettleship pathetically.

"The plot's out now," said Mr. Rathbone to the widow; "this is his French valet. I told you that it was Mr. Willars all the time."

"*Certainement, monsieur*," said Antoine; "*c'est Monsieur Villiers qui est mon maître*."

"He says Mr. Willars is his master," observed Mr. Rathbone. "I understand French a little myself. I'll ask him a question or two. I say, Monsieur, what's your name——"

"Antoine," replied the valet, bowing.

"Well, then, Monsieur Ontwine, do you know Mr. Cripps?"

"Creepps, sare!" cried the valet, perplexed and rather alarmed.

"Yes, Crackenthorpe Cripps," reiterated Mr. Rathbone.

"*Pardon, monsieur*, but may I inquire why you ask the question?" rejoined Antoine.

"Because we've had a visit from a person of that name," replied Mr. Rathbone, winking at the widow. "A person very like your master—very."

"*Mais, ma foi, monsieur!*—*vous ne vous méfiez pas?* You don't suspect, sare?"

"No, Monsieur Ontwine, I don't suspect, because I'm certain—your master has been deceiving us," rejoined Mr. Rathbone.

"Deceiving you, sare!" exclaimed the valet; "impossible! Mr. Villiers is a man of too much honour. He would never deceive a lady. Sare, he will call you out, when he get well, if you say so. He will run you through de ventre—what you call it—de stomach."

"For Heaven's sake, don't tell him, then, Monsieur Ontwine," cried Mr. Rathbone, alarmed. "I only meant to say that Mr. Willars has passed himself off as his own walet—as Mr. Cripps."

"*Quoi!*" exclaimed Antoine. "Mr. Villiers pass himself off as Creepps—is that it?"

"Yes, that's it, Monsieur Ontwine," replied Mr. Rathbone; "but we smoked him directly—we couldn't mistake him for a walet—ha! ha!"

"*Ah, vraiment non, monsieur!*" replied Antoine, joining in the laugh—"impossible!"

"There could be no mistake in your case, Monsieur

Ontwine," pursued Mr. Rathbone; "but with Mr. Willars it's a different matter."

"Very different, sare," replied Antoine gravely; and muttering to himself—"bête! niais!" he added aloud, to Mrs. Nettleship, "Has madame any commands to honour me with for my master?"

"Say how sorry I am for him," replied the widow. "I wish I might come and nurse him."

"Mr. Villiers will be *bien flatté*, I'm sure," replied the valet—"but he could not tink of such a ting."

"Nor anybody else," replied Mr. Rathbone. "It would be highly improper. No, he'll soon be well, and will come and pay his respects to you himself."

"My master's first visit will be rendered to you, madame," said the valet. And, with a profound bow, he took his leave.

As soon as Antoine was gone, Mr. Rathbone drew a chair near Mrs. Nettleship.

"My dear Mrs. N.," he began, "I'm glad to find things in such a good train with your beau."

"You're very obleeing to say so, Mr. R.," replied the widow, "and it's more than could be expected from you, considering the relations in which we once stood together."

"Now, my dear Mrs. N.," pursued Rathbone, "I'm going to act as a friend to you. Don't deceive yourself. You fancy Mr. Willars in love with you, but I'll tell you the truth—he's only in love with your fortune."

"You are his rival, Mr. R.," said the widow, turning up her nose.

"No, I ain't, Mrs. N.," replied the other; "and if you want to see whether he loves you or your fortune best, tell him what I'm going to tell you. You must know," he added, in an altered tone—"that in winding up your husband's affairs, I find, instead of his being the wealthy man he was supposed, that he died greatly in debt."

"In debt!" screamed the widow, pushing back her chair. "In debt, Mr. R."

"In debt, my dear Mrs. N.," repeated Mr. Rathbone; "but don't faint—there isn't time for it just now, and there's nobody but me to see you. Your case stands thus: You have nothing—nay, less than nothing—for all your husband's property will be seized. I've kept the secret safe enough to this moment, and I'll keep it till you're married, if I can. Now perhaps you begin to perceive my motive for giving you up so easily, and for encouraging the beau."

"Too plainly," sighed the widow. "But what's to be done, for I begin to think with you, that if Mr. Willars finds this out, he may be off his bargain."

"He never shall find it out," replied Mr. Rathbone, "if you'll promise to pay me the three thousand pounds to be forfeited by you in case of your breaking your marriage contract with me; and I'll tell you how to do it. He believes you to be worth fifty thousand pounds—ha! ha!—and I've taken care to favour the notion—he! he! you shall give him the whole of your property, and make him settle five thousand pounds of his own upon you. I'll be your trustee; and the money must be paid into my

hands. Thus you'll get a young gay husband, and saddle him with your debts."

"I can't do it," said the widow; "I tremble at the thought of such dreadful deception. Why, it's little better than swindling. I'll explain my situation to him, and throw myself upon his compassion."

"And lose him, as sure as my name's Tom Rathbone," replied the other.

"Well, I place myself in your hands," said the widow; "it's a frightful position."

"We must lose no time in bringing the matter to an issue," rejoined Mr. Rathbone. "My attorney, Mr. Diggs, will prepare the settlement for you. Keep up your spirits—it'll be all right—ha! ha!" and he took his departure.

Mrs. Nettleship took to her bed for a couple of days, at the end of which time she grew more composed, had another interview with Mr. Rathbone, requested him to show her her husband's books, and having satisfied herself that his statement was correct, promised to follow his instructions implicitly.

At the end of a fortnight, Mr. Cripps presented himself in Billiter Square. He looked very pale, for he had been drinking freely the night before with the Duke of Doncaster's gentleman; but this circumstance only lent him additional interest in the eyes of Mrs. Nettleship. As preconcerted, soon after his arrival, Mr. Rathbone entered the room.

"Ah, Mr. Willars!" said the latter—"glad to see you out again. Hope you killed your man—

ha! ha! I've been thinking a good deal about you during your absence."

"I hope you've made up your mind to release Mrs. Nettleship from her engagement to you, Mr. Rathbone?" replied Mr. Cripps.

"Before I reply, I must ask Mrs. Nettleship one or two questions," replied the other. "Is it your intention to marry Mr. Willars, ma'am?"

"La! Mr. R., what a question!" replied the widow. "However, I'll answer it. It is."

"And how do you mean to settle your property, madam?—on yourself, I hope?" rejoined Mr. Rathbone. "I've no doubt Mr. Willars will make an excellent husband. But you are bound to take care of your own."

"I shan't settle it at all," said Mrs. Nettleship—"if I give him myself, my fortune follows, as a matter of course."

"You are an angel," cried Mr. Cripps rapturously; "and if you hadn't a farthing, instead of being as wealthy and beautiful as you are, you would be equally dear to me."

"Are you quite sure?" cried Mrs. Nettleship.

"'Pon rep!" replied the valet, pressing his heart.

"Well, then——" cried the widow.

"Mrs. N. is about to test your sincerity by representing her circumstances as very different from what they are," interrupted Mr. Rathbone. "She told me she would do so. But I don't think it a fair joke; and I therefore put you on your guard against it."

"It might have startled me a little," replied Mr.

Cripps, forcing a laugh ; “ but it would have made no difference in my sentiments or intentions. And now, Mr. Rathbone, since disinterestedness is the order of the day, you, I hope, will imitate the good example set you by Mrs. Nettleship, and excuse her the three thousand pounds. I’ll now tell you frankly, that my motive for pretending to be a valet was to trick you out of your consent. But finding I am dealing with a liberal, high-minded gentleman, I think it the best as well as the most straightforward course to ask you to remit the penalty. You cannot fairly claim it without forfeiting both the lady’s and my good opinion ; and I’m sure you don’t desire to forfeit either.”

“ I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” replied Mr. Rathbone, putting on an air of candour equal to that of the valet ; “ if you’ll agree to settle five thousand pounds on Mrs. N., I will give up the contract.”

“ Settle five thousand pounds !” exclaimed Mr. Cripps, rather staggered.

“ No great sum to a man of fortune,” rejoined Mr. Rathbone ; “ she brings you twenty times the amount.”

“ And herself,” insinuated the widow.

“ I’ll act as her trustee,” pursued Mr. Rathbone—
“ it’ll be a very pretty present to her.”

“ I’m sure you won’t hesitate, dearest,” whispered the widow, “ since Mr. Rathbone’s so kind.”

“ No—no, I can’t hesitate,” stammered Mr. Cripps ;
“ but just now all my money’s locked up, ’pon rep !”

“ Don’t let that be an obstacle,” said Mr. Rath-

bone—"you shall give me a bond for the amount—that will do just as well."

"Ah! if you're satisfied with that, I'm quite content," returned Mr. Cripps. "I thought you required the money down, and that would rather have inconvenienced me."

"Well, then, we had better settle the matter at once," said Mr. Rathbone. "I'll go and fetch my attorney, who shall prepare the bond and settlement; and then I'll deliver the contract to Mrs. Nettleship, after which there'll be no further obstacle to your union."

So saying, he quitted the room, and the lovers were left alone together.

Neither of them felt very easy; and at last the widow proposed an adjournment to the dining-room, where refreshments were set out, and a few glasses of wine restored Mr. Cripps to his usual confidence and spirits.

About two hours afterwards, Mr. Rathbone returned, bringing with him Mr. Diggs. Both the settlement and the bond were prepared.

Not till that moment did it occur to Mr. Cripps that he was about to commit a forgery. He gazed at the deeds, as if uncertain what to do; then, hastily snatching up a pen, he signed them in his master's name, and in a signature so nearly resembling Mr. Villiers', that it could scarcely be detected from it. This done, Mr. Rathbone delivered a paper to Mrs. Nettleship, and took his departure with Diggs.

X

*How Mr. Cripps' Marriage with the Widow
was interrupted.*

ONE morning, about a week after this, Mr. Jukes, while busied in the butler's pantry, was surprised by a visit from his nephew, who strutted in very unceremoniously, and seated himself, according to custom, on the edge of the table. He was more finely dressed than usual, being equipped in one of his master's best suits.

"Well, nunks, how are you, old fellow?" he said. "This is the last visit I shall pay you in this way."

"Glad to hear it," replied Mr. Jukes drily.

"Your wits were ever dull, nunks," replied Mr. Cripps; "and they are now more than usually obtuse. I mean that when I visit you next, it will be in a gilt coach, like my master's."

"Body o' me!" exclaimed the butler—"what new folly is the lad dreaming of?"

"You shall hear presently, nunks," replied the valet; "but I'm quite exhausted with my walk. Give me a cup of ale, if you have no wine. Not bad tippie, 'pon rep!" he added, tossing off the glass poured out for him. "I'm going to be married, nunks."

"What, to that foolish widow?" cried Mr. Jukes.

"I'm about to marry Mrs. Nettleship," replied Mr. Cripps; "and I will thank you to speak more

respectfully of one to whom you will soon be so nearly related. I'm to be married to her on Thursday next, and am come to invite you to the wedding. She has fifty thousand pounds, and it's all to be mine—no settlement—no tying up—no cursed trustees—fifty thousand pounds made over!—what do you think of that, nunks, eh?"

"I'm lost in astonishment," replied Mr. Jukes; "but take care of it when you get it. Don't fool it away."

"Leave me to manage my own concerns, nunks," rejoined the valet. "I'll take another glass of ale," he added, helping himself.

"Well, and where's the wedding to take place?" asked Mr. Jukes.

"At my master's," replied Mr. Cripps. "There'll be a dinner, and a ball after it, and a supper after that. You'll come, of course; but you mustn't come as a servant. You must lay aside your livery, and put on one of Trussell Beechcroft's suits."

"If I come at all, it'll be in my own clothes, depend upon it," replied Mr. Jukes. "But pray, does your master know what's going to take place in his house?—has he given you leave to have this dinner, and ball, and supper, eh?"

"Pshaw! nunks, do you think I'd ask him?" rejoined Mr. Cripps, helping himself to a pinch of snuff. "He's going to Newmarket on Wednesday with Sir Bulkeley Price, and they don't return till Friday. And now, nunks," pursued Mr. Cripps, fortifying himself with another pinch of snuff, "I want a little money from you. I must have all you can spare—I must, 'pon rep!"

"I thought it would end in this," replied the butler.

"Sdeath! I ask no particular favour," rejoined Mr. Cripps—"I only want it till the day after the wedding, and that's but three days off. Come, down with a hundred, and you shall have a hundred to the back of it—you shall, by this light?"

"Ods bods! how the boy talks!" cried the butler. "I've no hundred to lend, and if I had, I wouldn't lend them on usury."

"Well, fifty I *must* have," said Mr. Cripps; "I can't do with less. Forty—you shake your head—thirty—twenty—I'm obliged to come down like an auctioneer. You are devoid of all natural feeling, nunks; more stony-hearted than Brutus, to refuse your sister's son twenty pounds for three days, and perhaps prevent him from settling for life."

"Well," said Mr. Jukes, moved by this appeal, "I will lend you twenty guineas, nephew, but you must repay me. It's the savings of the last three years."

"Repay you, faith and troth, I will, thou best of nunkies," replied Mr. Cripps, embracing him. "I'll repay you with enormous interest."

"I don't want any interest," replied the butler; "I shall be well content with the principal."

And opening a drawer in the cupboard, he took out of it a small leathern bag containing twenty guineas, which he counted and gave to his nephew.

"Twenty thousand thanks, nunks," said Mr. Cripps, pocketing the gold; "and rely upon being

punctually paid. By-the-bye, if you're at all tired of your present place, and should like to serve me, I needn't say I shall be happy to engage you as butler, and to increase your wages. What do you get from old Abel?"

"Never mind what I get, nephew," replied Mr. Jukes; "I've no idea of leaving him."

"No offence, nunks," rejoined the other. "'Sdeath! it's no degradation to a man to be his nephew's butler. I know two fathers who're their sons' shoe-blacks. But you'll not fail to come to the wedding. Twelve o'clock on Thursday. Be punctual. My butler's place shall be left open for a few days, in case you should change your mind about it."

And he took his leave in high glee, while Mr. Jukes, as he shut the door after him, said dolefully to himself—

"I'm afraid I've done wrong in lending the money. However, he's my sister's son."

Having now got a larger sum in his pocket than he had ever had before, Mr. Cripps felt strongly tempted to try his luck at the gaming-table, but he resisted the temptation. "No, no," he thought, "it won't do to hazard this money. It's everything to me just now. I shall have plenty to spare for play shortly."

On his way home, Mr. Cripps called upon Peter Pokerich, and invited him and the fair Thomasine to the wedding, the one in the capacity of groomsman, and the other in that of bridesmaid. And the invitation was delightedly accepted by both.

A great load was taken from the valet's mind on

the following morning, as he helped his master into Sir Bulkeley Price's carriage, and saw him start, as he supposed, for Newmarket.

Not a moment was to be lost. Every preparation that could be made without exciting suspicion had been made beforehand—but now Mr. Cripps set to work in earnest.

He went to the Cocoa Tree and ordered, in his master's name, a first-rate dinner, with abundance of the finest wines, to be sent in on the following day. He next engaged a band of musicians for the ball, and ordered fruits, confectionery, and pastry for the supper. His fellow-servants, who were all, of course, in the secret, and to whom he had promised great things as soon as he should be put in possession of the widow's fortune, assisted him in his preparations for the fête.

It was arranged that the ceremony should take place in the upper chamber, where Randolph first breakfasted with the beau, and the clergyman selected to perform it was Doctor Gaynam. Thus nothing seemed wanting on the valet's part to complete the matter; and late on Wednesday evening he went to Billiter Square, to inform Mrs. Nettle-ship that all was ready. After a brief visit, for he was somewhat fatigued, he took a tender adieu of her, saying, as he squeezed her hand at parting—

“We shall meet to-morrow, to part no more!”

The next morning, betimes, Mr. Cripps placed himself under the hands of Antoine, who proceeded to array him in a magnificent suit, which had never

been worn by his master, it having only been sent home the night before by Desmartins.

It consisted of a coat of crimson embossed velvet, richly laced with gold, breeches of the same material, and a white satin waistcoat flowered with gold. To these were added, pink silk hose rolled above the knee, superb diamond buckles, a point-lace cravat, and his master's handsomest Ramillies periwig, which had been dressed by Peter Pokerich.

Nearly three hours were expended in thus attiring him ; and when all was completed, Antoine declared that his master had never looked half so well—a sentiment in which Mr. Cripps, as he complacently surveyed himself in the cheval-glass, entirely concurred.

A little before twelve, Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine arrived. The lady was dressed in white and silver, with a fly-cap with long lappets, and looked so excessively pretty that Mr. Cripps could not help wishing she had been the bride instead of Mrs. Nettleship.

While he was welcoming them, and passing some high-flown compliments on the fair Thomasine's charms, Mr. Jukes was shown into the room ; but, as he was in his butler's dress, his nephew did not condescend to speak to him.

Shortly after this, Antoine announced that the bride had arrived, and Mr. Cripps hurried downstairs to meet her.

Mrs. Nettleship, who had bestowed more than ordinary pains upon her person, wore a yellow satin sack embroidered with little dots of gold. She had

large pearl ear-rings, a garnet necklace, and a diamond solitaire. Her complexion, which was naturally rather high, had been corrected by white French powder, and was further set off with abundance of little patches on her cheeks, neck, and shoulders. She carried a beautiful Indian fan, the handle of which was ornamented with precious stones.

She had arrived in great state, a gilt chariot lined with pale blue satin, hired for her from a coachmaker by Mr. Rathbone, having formed her conveyance; and she was attended by a couple of footmen out of place, likewise hired for the occasion, habited in superb liveries of sky-blue cloth trimmed with silver, with silver shoulder-knots, and point d'Espagne hats.

Mr. Rathbone, who accompanied her, was dressed in a suit of purple velvet, laced with gold. Almost bewildered by the grandeur she beheld around, the widow was led upstairs by Mr. Cripps; her wonder increased at every step she took. The two long-eared spaniels and the macaw enchanted her; but she actually screamed with delight on beholding the monkey, in his little scarlet coat and bag-wig.

Coffee, chocolate, and champagne were then handed round by Antoine and the page; and while this was going on, the clergyman and his assistant were announced.

Doctor Gaynam had a much more respectable appearance than when he officiated at Sir Singleton Spinke's marriage. He was dressed in his full canonicals, and wore a well-powdered full-bottomed wig, which Peter Pokerich would not have disdained.

Meanwhile Mr. Cripps had seated himself by the bride on one of the couches, and was talking very tenderly to her, when he perceived his uncle approach Mr. Rathbone, as if with the intention of addressing him.

He instantly arose, and taking the latter aside, whispered a few words to him, and then, having accomplished his object, which was to prevent any communication between him and Mr. Jukes, told the clergyman to proceed with the ceremony.

Doctor Gaynam was sipping a glass of usquebaugh, but he hastily gulped it down, and declared himself perfectly ready. He then took a prayer-book from the clerk, and stationed himself between the windows, motioning the others to take their places before him.

All was soon arranged. Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine stood near the bride; Mr. Rathbone near the bridegroom; Antoine behind him; while the group was completed by the two Africans, who had mounted a settee in the corner, to obtain a full view of the ceremony. The page was on the floor keeping the dogs quiet, who were quarrelling with the monkey, and biting its tail.

Just as Doctor Gaynam had opened his book, and uttered a preliminary cough, a noise was heard at the door, and Mr. Cripps, turning to see what was the matter, beheld it open, and admit his master.

The valet's alarm was instantly communicated to the whole assemblage. Antoine shrugged his shoulders, and lifted up his hands in affright. The

two Africans exchanged glances of alarm, and all eyes were directed towards the beau, who with angry looks, and grasping his clouded cane, marched towards the valet. He was followed by Lady Brabazon, Sir Bulkeley Price, and Trussell Beechcroft.

Lady Brabazon was attended by her black page, leading her dog by a riband, and this arrival excited the anger of one of the spaniels, whose furious barking set the macaw screaming.

Mr. Cripps presented a very chopfallen appearance. All his assurance deserted him. His hands dropped to his side, and he scarcely dared to meet his master's angry gaze.

"Rascal!" exclaimed Villiers, "I have at last fairly detected you. I'll teach you to put on my clothes—to assume my name——"

"What!" screamed Mrs. Nettleship, dropping a bottle of salts which she had placed to her nose—"isn't it really himself—isn't it Mr. Willars?"

"No, madam," replied the beau—"I am Mr. Villiers; and this rascal is only my valet, Crackenthorpe Cripps."

"This looks like the real gentleman, I must say," cried Mr. Rathbone, who was thunderstruck with surprise.

"Oh, the villain!—the base deceiver!—the impostor!" shrieked Mrs. Nettleship, clenching her hands, and regarding the valet as if she would annihilate him. "I'll tear his eyes out! To deceive and expose me in this way—to—to—to—oh! I

shall never survive it. Support me!" she added, falling into the arms of the fair Thomasine.

"This is really too bad of you, sir," said Mr. Cripps, who began to recover himself a little. "You've deceived *me*. I thought you were at Newmarket."

"I received information of your practices, rascal," replied the beau, "and resolving to see to what extent you carried them, I only went to a short distance from town, and then returned with Sir Bulkeley Price, with whom I have remained till now. And a pretty discovery I've made, i'faith! My house filled with company—my servants turned into your servants—a dinner, supper, confectionery, wine, fruit, musicians, and the devil knows what, ordered at my expense."

"Well, they're not thrown away, sir," replied Mr. Cripps. "You can marry the lady yourself, if you think proper. I've no doubt she'll consent to the exchange, and she has fifty thousand pounds."

"Oh, the impudence!" exclaimed Mrs. Nettlehip, jumping up. "I'll not be taken in a second time. I'll be revenged on all the sex!"

"You are not aware, Mr. Willars, of the extensive frauds this rascal has practised upon you," said Mr. Rathbone. "He has actually signed a bond for five thousand pounds in your name, which I have in my pocket."

"The devil he has!" exclaimed Villiers.

"But it is of no effect, since the marriage has not taken place," said Mr. Cripps; "and if Mr. Villiers

chooses to take the lady, he will of course pay you himself."

In spite of himself, the beau could not help laughing.

"Bad as Mr. Cripps is, he is not worse than the other party," said Trussell, stepping forward; "while he was duping them, they tried to dupe him. I understand from Mr. Jukes, who has it on unquestionable authority, that Mrs. Nettleship, so far from being a wealthy widow, is greatly in debt, while her friend there, Mr. Rathbone, hoped to pocket the five thousand pounds secured by the bond he has mentioned."

"Gadso! then it seems I've had an escape!" cried Mr. Cripps.

"You have," replied Trussell; "and your uncle would have told you all this before, if you had not kept him at a distance."

"I won't stay here to be laughed at!" cried the widow, looking defiance at the jeering countenances around her. "Mr. Rathbone, your arm. I'll make you marry me yourself, or pay the penalty of the contract," she added, in a whisper.

"You'll not mistake a valet for a gentleman after this, Monsieur Rathbone," said Antoine—"ha! ha!"

"You had better go away by the back stairs," said Trussell, stopping them; "for there are a couple of officers in the hall waiting to arrest you!"

"Curse on it! I sent them myself!" said Mr. Rathbone, "to compel the rascal I supposed to be Mr. Willars to pay your debts."

And hurrying out of the room, he acted upon Trussell's suggestion.

"And now, rascal," said the beau to the valet, "you are no longer in my service—I discharge you. And you may thank your stars that I let you off so easily."

"I was about to discharge *you*, sir," rejoined the valet impertinently. "I don't desire to live with a gentleman who takes his servants by surprise. He's as bad as a jealous husband."

"Stay!" cried the beau—"you don't leave me in that way. Antoine, stand by him. Now, sir, take off that peruke—take it off carefully—now the sword."

The orders were obeyed, and the wig and sword delivered to the French valet.

"Now take off the coat." Mr. Cripps complied with a sigh.

"Now the waistcoat." The order was obeyed.

"Now the cravat." And it was taken off.

"Now the diamond buckles."

"Anything else?" inquired Mr. Cripps, as he gave up the buckles. "Recollect there are ladies in the room, sir."

"Yes; take yourself off," rejoined the beau.

Even thus shorn of his splendour, Mr. Cripps maintained his customary assurance. He bowed profoundly and gracefully round, and quitted the room amid the laughter of the company.

XI

"Stulte, hac nocte repetunt animam tuam ; et quæ parasti, cujus erunt."—LUCÆ xii.

"WHERE can Jacob be, I wonder?" said the miser, in a querulous tone, as he crept back to his chair by the fire, after the departure of Philip and Diggs with their prize. "What keeps him out so late?"

"I don't think he'll come home at all to-night, father," replied Hilda. "But never mind him—go to bed."

"Not come home!" echoed the miser, with a sharp cry; "if he doesn't, and that soon, too, he shall never enter my house again. How dares he go without leave? But perhaps you allowed him to do so. You begin to fancy yourself mistress here, because I can't look after you; but I'll teach you differently."

"Indeed, father, you are quite mistaken," replied Hilda meekly. "Jacob told me he wished to go out on business of his own, and I didn't like to refuse him—especially as he said he would soon be back."

"And nicely he keeps his word," rejoined the miser; "why, he has already been absent more than two hours. But how do you know he won't be back to-night? Have you heard anything about him?"

Hilda hesitated.

"You don't suspect he has carried off anything?"

continued the miser, getting up, and fixing a wildly inquisitive glance upon her. "Has he robbed me, ha? Don't tell me a lie! He has—I see he has!"

"You are wrong, father, he has not," replied Hilda. "I will answer with my life for Jacob's honesty. My information is derived from Philip Frewin, who told me he has got locked up, from some cause, in the watch-house. I should disbelieve the statement but that it seems borne out by his absence."

"I've no doubt of it," cried the miser—"none whatever. When he returns, he gets his dismissal."

"And what will you do without him, father?" rejoined Hilda. "You will get no one so faithful—so honest."

"Hum!" muttered the miser—"that is a consideration. You needn't stay with me any longer."

"I don't like to leave you, dear father," said Hilda. "You are very much excited; pray let me sit up with you."

"No," replied the miser peremptorily. "Give me my gruel, and then go to bed."

In obedience to his injunctions, a small basin of gruel, and a slice of toasted bread, were presently placed before him. He swallowed a few mouthfuls, and then pushed the gruel aside.

"I have no appetite," he said. "Take care of it. It will warm up again for my supper to-morrow night."

"God grant you may be able to partake of it!" she answered, regarding him wistfully. "Father,"

she added, approaching him, and speaking in a supplicatory tone, "may I pray with you?"

"Not to-night," rejoined the miser. "I am seldom inclined for devotion, and just now my mind is too much disturbed for it."

"You make me very uneasy, dear father," cried Hilda, taking his hand. "Oh, do not—do not, I beseech you, postpone making up your account with your Maker! You know not how soon you may be called hence!"

"No more of this," cried the miser, shaking her off. "I tell you I am not so ill as you think me. Good night!"

"One word more before I go, father," she said. "It is not too late to revoke your unjust will."

"What I have done, I have done," he replied, and turning away, he fixed his eyes on the fire.

Oppressed with the gloomiest foreboding, she quitted the room. On gaining the lower room she fell upon her aunt's bosom in an agony of distress. When she was sufficiently recovered to be able to explain to Mrs. Clinton what had occurred, the good old lady was almost as much afflicted as herself.

"But that the hour is so untimely," she cried, "I would advise you to go to Mr. Beechcroft, and consult him. It would distract me if these villains should succeed in their infamous scheme."

"Providence, to whose care I resign myself, will thwart them, I am well assured!" rejoined Hilda. "I will go to Mr. Beechcroft the first thing to-morrow morning, and I am certain he will assist me

if he can. And now let us retire to rest, for Jacob, it is clear, will not return."

Left to himself, the miser remained for some time cowering over the fire, and drew closer and closer to it as it burnt lower, and diffused less warmth. At last, as it threatened to go out entirely, he scraped up all the cinders he could collect from the hearth, and throwing them upon it, kept it slightly alive.

Suddenly, as if something had crossed him, he arose, and going to the table on which the writing materials were left, took up a pen; but after gazing some time vacantly at the paper, he laid it down again, muttering—

"Another time—another time!"

He then took off part of his clothes, and got into bed; but sleep fled his eyelids, and dismal thoughts, which he vainly sought to shake off, took possession of him. At length he sank into a sort of trance, during which a hideous nightmare, in the shape of a mountain of gold, laid its heavy hand upon him. Half stifled, he started bolt upright in bed, and gazed timorously round the imperfectly lighted chamber. It was a gusty night, and the noise of the casements creaking in the wind added to his fears.

Unable to endure this state of nervous apprehension longer, he sprang out of bed, and, hastily wrapping himself in his dressing-gown, took down the pistol from the hook over the chimney, and proceeded to the closet where he fancied he heard some one trying to break in, and examined the window, but it appeared perfectly secure.

No sooner, however, was one source of dread removed, than another was aroused. His hoards might be gone! Terrified by this idea, he flew to all his hiding-places, and placed their contents on the table. His dim eyes sparkled with unnatural brilliancy as he gloated over them.

While telling over the pieces, and weighing them in his hand, a new recollection crossed him. Snatching up the candle, he hurried to a small cupboard at one side of the room, at the bottom of which lay a heap of old rags and rubbish, apparently put there out of the way. Hastily removing this dusty pile, some half-dozen leathern bags were exposed to view.

"Here they are—here they are!" he exclaimed, with a cry of childish delight. "Oh, my darlings!—my treasures!—how glad I am to see you. You give me new life. Talk of physic—pshaw! there is none like gold. The sight of it cures me in an instant. I feel well—quite well; no, not quite," he added, as a sudden giddiness seized him and he had to catch at the closet door for support; "not quite well; but better—much better. What a memory mine must be to forget these bags—each containing two hundred guineas—that's twelve hundred! Twelve hundred guineas! and I had forgotten them. I hope I have not forgotten anything else. Let me see—oh! my head!—my head!" he continued, shaking it mournfully. "My memory's clean gone!—clean gone! But what shall I do with these bags? they're not safe here. Jacob may find them in clearing the room. I'll hide them in the cellar with the other treasure."

Utterly forgetful that the chest had been removed, he immediately set about executing his design.

Listening at the door to hear that all was still, he took up two of the bags with the intention of carrying them downstairs; but finding them too heavy for him, he was obliged to content himself with one, and thus in transporting them all to the cellar, he had to perform six journeys. The last had nearly proved fatal, for, as he tottered down the cellar steps, he missed his footing, and rolled to the bottom.

With some difficulty he got up again; but heedless of the bruises he had received, he picked up his candle, which was extinguished in the fall, and returned to his bed-chamber to light it at the fire. This done, he procured the shovel, and repairing to the cellar, commenced his task.

In his present state of debility and exhaustion, it cost him infinite labour to get up the bricks, and he was frequently obliged to desist from the toil, and rest himself; but, though he shook in every limb—though thick damps burst from every pore, he still persevered.

Having got out the bricks, he carefully scraped off the surface of the loose sandy soil. Surprised that the spade met with no resistance, his alarm was instantly excited, and he plunged it deeply into the ground.

But no chest was there!

For a few minutes he stood transfixed with despair. It never occurred to him that he had him-

self removed his treasure, but he concluded he had been robbed of it.

At length his anguish found vent in a piercing cry, and he rushed towards the door with the intention of calling up Jacob; but the recollection that forced itself upon him, that the porter was from home, checked him.

Other imperfect ideas thronged upon his bewildered brain. A glimmering recollection of digging up the chest crossed him, but he fancied he must have taken out its contents and buried them deeper in the ground. Somewhat calmed by the idea, he commenced digging anew with frightful ardour, and soon cleared out the soil to nearly the depth of three feet. But as he found nothing, his apprehensions returned with new force and paralysed his efforts.

Throwing aside the spade, he groped about in the sandy soil with his hands, in the hopes of finding a few pieces of gold. A single piece would have satisfied him; but there was none—nothing but little pebbles mixed with the sand. His moans, while thus employed, were truly piteous.

At this juncture, his candle, which had long been expiring in the socket, went out, leaving him in total darkness. A mortal faintness seized him at the same time. He tried to get out of the hole, but fell back with the effort—his head striking against the bricks. He struggled to get up again, but in vain—his limbs refused their office. He tried to cry out for help, but a hollow rattling sound alone issued from his throat.

At length, by a convulsive effort, he did contrive to lift his head from the ground ; but that was all he could do. His hands clutched ineffectually at the sandy soil ; his frame was powerless ; and a stifled groan broke from his lips. But this condition was too horrible for long endurance. The muscles of the neck relaxed ; his head fell heavily backwards ; and after a gasp or two, respiration ceased.

Thus died this unhappy man, unattended, in a cellar, half entombed in the hole dugged as a hiding-place for a portion of his wealth—wealth for which he had sacrificed all his comforts, all his feelings, all his affections, and for which alone of late he had seemed to live. Thus he perished—a fearful example of the effects of the heart-searing vice of which he was the slave and the victim.

XII

Abel Beechcroft finds the Body of the Miser in the Cellar—His Reflections upon it—Jacob's Grief for his Master.

UNCONSCIOUS of the awful catastrophe that had occurred, Hilda, whose eyes had never closed since she sought her pillow, rose at an early hour, and set out for Abel Beechcroft's residence.

Abel had not yet left his room, but she found Mr. Jukes astir, and in some alarm at the absence of

Trussell and Randolph ; but she allayed his fears by telling him what she supposed had happened to them.

She was then shown into the library, and shortly afterwards Abel Beechcroft made his appearance. He was prepared for some disastrous tidings, and the moment he saw her, her looks confirmed his fears.

After a kindly greeting, she proceeded to recount to him the infamous scheme practised upon her father by Philip and Diggs.

"This is worse than even I anticipated," said Abel, as she closed her recital. "Your father is infatuated on the subject of his nephew, whose conduct, as well as that of his attorney, is scandalous. I will go with you at once. If not too late, and he is in his right mind, I think I can use such arguments with your father as will induce him to alter his iniquitous design."

"I hope so," sighed Hilda ; "but I have great misgivings."

As they were quitting the room, they were stopped by Mrs. Crew.

"You up at this hour, sister !" cried Abel, somewhat discomposed.

"I was informed that Miss Scarve was here," replied Mrs. Crew, "and I therefore hurried down as fast as I could. As an old friend of her mother, I naturally felt anxious to see her."

And she embraced Hilda affectionately.

"I am sorry to abridge your first meeting with the daughter of an old friend, Sophia," interposed

Abel ; "but when you are told that her father, who, you know, is in a very precarious condition, has been prevailed upon to make a will in his nephew's favour, you will see that not a moment must be lost in trying to induce him to revoke it."

"I do—I do," replied Mrs. Crew. "But where is Randolph?"

"He did not come home last night," replied Abel sarcastically.

"Not come home!" echoed Mrs. Crew, turning pale. "What can have happened to him?"

"Nothing very particular," replied Abel hastily. "Trussell is absent likewise. You will see them both at breakfast, I dare say. But we are losing time. Good morning, sister."

"Farewell, Hilda!" exclaimed Mrs. Crew, again embracing her. "I hope all will be accomplished that you desire. But if it should not be, it will serve only to increase our—" and she laid a slight emphasis on the pronoun—"interest in you. I already love you as if you were my own daughter."

"And believe me, your attachment is fully requited, madam," replied Hilda.

And she quitted the house with Abel Beechcroft, who displayed considerable impatience during her interview with his sister.

On their arrival at the Little Sanctuary, they were admitted by Mrs. Clinton, for Jacob had not yet returned.

After some little consideration, Abel went up alone to the miser's room, and knocking two or three times, and receiving no answer, opened the

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Art. 1000

Abel Beecroft Discovering the Body



door. Approaching the bed, he found it empty, with the clothes turned down, as left by the miser; and casting a hurried glance into the closet to satisfy himself that no person was there, he hastily ran downstairs to Hilda, to acquaint her with the alarming discovery he had made.

She was greatly terrified; but after a moment's reflection, suggested that her father might possibly have gone down to the cellar, and related the circumstance which she herself had once witnessed there.

Concurring in the opinion, Abel offered immediately to go in search of him; and dissuading Hilda, who secretly shared his worst apprehensions, from accompanying him, took a candle, and descended to the cellar.

As he entered the vault, he indistinctly perceived a ghastly object; and springing forward, held up the light, so as to reveal it more fully. His fancy had not deceived him. There, in a grave—evidently digged by his own hands—lay his old enemy—dead—dead!

While Abel was wrapt in contemplation of this miserable spectacle, and surrendering himself to the thoughts which it inspired, heavy steps were heard behind him, and Jacob rushed into the cellar.

"Where is he?" cried the porter, in accents of alarm. "Has anything happened? Ha! I see."

And pushing past Abel Beechcroft, he precipitated himself into the hole with his master.

"All's over with him," he cried, in a voice of agony and self-reproach, and grasping the cold hand of the corpse. "This would never have happened

if I had been at home. I'm in a manner his murderer."

"Another hand than yours has been at work here, Jacob," said Abel; "and terrible as your poor master's fate has been, it may prove a salutary lesson to others. There he lies, who a few hours ago was the possessor of useless thousands, the value of which he knew not—nay, the very existence of which he knew not—for the few bags of gold beside him were the only palpable treasure he owned. There he lies, who tormented himself with a vainer quest than ever lured the blind searcher after the philosopher's stone. There he lies, the saddest and most degrading proof of the vanity of human desires, having died the death of a dog, with no heart to grieve for him, no eye to weep for him."

"You're wrong in sayin' no one grieves for him, sir," rejoined Jacob, in a broken voice, "because I do. With all his faults, I loved him—nay, I think I loved him the better for his faults—and though I often talked of leavin' him, I never really meant to do so."

"Your feelings do you credit, Jacob, and are consistent with the notion I had formed of you," said Abel.

"I couldn't have said as much to him while he was alive," blubbered Jacob—"not if he would have given me half his treasure to utter it. But I'm sorry now I didn't bear his humours better."

"A natural regret, Jacob," said Abel. "The compunction we feel for unkindness exhibited by us to the dead, should teach us consideration to the

living. I could forgive your poor master all but the last act of his life."

"What was that?" asked Jacob, looking up.

"The leaving his property away from his daughter," replied Abel. "Philip Frewin visited him late last night, with Diggs, and induced him to make a will in his favour."

"Hell's curses on them both?" roared Jacob, in a furious tone, and springing out of the excavation. "And Philip came here! That was the reason, then, why we were locked up in the watch'us. I thought there was somethin' in it. They did well to get me out of the way. If I had been at home, I'd have killed 'em outright, if I had been hanged for it, sooner than this should have happened. And do you mean to say, sir, that he has disinherited Miss Hilda entirely?"

"Unless she marries Philip Frewin," replied Abel.

"You've dried my eyes with a vengeance," cried Jacob. "I could almost find in my heart to spurn his avaricious old carcass. But it's not altogether his fault. The crime lies chiefly at the door of that scoundrel, Diggs. But such a will won't hold good, sir—will it?"

"I hope not," sighed Abel. "But I must now go upstairs to your young mistress, to acquaint her with her bereavement. It will be your care to remove the body."

And with a slow footstep and saddened air he quitted the vault.

XIII

Diggs and Philip unexpectedly arrive—The Miser's Will is read, and Philip declares his intention of acting upon it—Abel unbosoms himself to Hilda.

ABEL's looks as he approached Hilda convinced her of what had happened, and rendered the announcement of the melancholy tidings he had to communicate almost superfluous.

"You have lost a father, my dear child?" he said, in a tone of the deepest commiseration; "but you have a friend left who will endeavour to supply his place."

Hilda could only thank him by her looks.

"Under any circumstances, this would have been a heavy blow to you," pursued Abel; "but under the present it comes with additional severity. Still, I am sure you have fortitude to support the trial; and I trust, with the blessing of God, to restore you to your rights. Need I say my house is your home, and that of your worthy aunt, whenever you choose to remove to it."

"I feel your kindness deeply, very deeply, sir," she rejoined; "but as long as circumstances will permit me, I will stay here."

Just then a knock was heard at the door, and as no answer was returned by those within, it was opened, giving entrance to Philip Frewin and Diggs. They both appeared disconcerted on seeing Abel

Beechcroft, but Diggs instantly recovered himself, and looking round, at once conjectured what had happened.

"Miss Scarve," he said, "we were passing by the house, and seeing the street-door open—a very unusual occurrence here—entered without knocking. I hope and trust nothing is amiss."

"Go into the cellar and satisfy yourself," said Abel Beechcroft sternly.

"Good God, sir! you don't mean to insinuate that Mr. Scarve has died in the cellar!" cried the attorney.

"Oons! I hope not!" exclaimed Philip, scarcely able to conceal his satisfaction. "How is my uncle, Hilda?"

"My father is dead," she replied, in a freezing tone.

"Dead!" repeated Philip. "Lord bless me! how very sudden. Lucky we happened to turn in, Diggs. Can we do anything for you, cousin?"

Hilda made no reply, but the attorney immediately interposed.

"As your uncle's executor, and in a manner his heir, Mr. Frewin," he said, "it is your duty to seal up all his chests, cupboards, bureaux, and drawers, without delay. I will assist you."

"Hold!" exclaimed Abel. "I give you both notice that Miss Scarve considers that the will under which you propose to act has been fraudulently obtained; and she will dispute it."

"Miss Scarve will act as her feelings dictate, or as she may be advised, sir," replied the attorney;

"but, in the meantime, it will but be right for Mr. Frewin to take proper precautions. Let us go to Mr. Scarve's chamber, sir."

So saying, and disregarding the looks of disgust directed against them by Abel, they went upstairs.

"Oh! do not leave me till they are gone, Mr. Beechcroft," said Hilda.

"I will not," he replied, taking a seat beside her.

Meanwhile, the attorney and his companion proceeded about their task with some semblance of feeling, but real indifference.

Having glanced through the room upstairs, and swept all the poor miser's hoards, which were strewn about on the table, into a chest, which he locked, Diggs called Philip's attention to the position of the pen and paper, saying, "I am almost certain he meant to write something—perhaps revoke his will—but it was too late—ha! ha!"

With a sly chuckle, he then proceeded to seal up all the boxes and cases. In this task he was assisted by Philip Frewin, and they had just concluded it, when heavy footsteps were heard on the stairs, and the next moment the door was thrown open and Jacob entered the room, carrying in his arms the body of his master, which he deposited on the bed.

"And this was how he died!" said Philip, casting a shuddering glance at the corpse.

"Ay, ay, you calculated your chances nicely," rejoined Jacob. "You'd cheat the devil, you would. But you haven't got the fortune yet."

"Harkee, friend Jacob," said Philip, "I will

thank you to speak more respectfully to me in future, or I will let you know who is master here."

"You never shall be *my* master," replied Jacob; "and if I only get the word from my young missis, see if I don't turn you both out of the house, neck and heels."

Philip would have made an angry retort, but Diggs checked him, whispering that "it would not do just now."

"You may get off from me," pursued Jacob; "but you won't get off from Mr. Randolph Crew for your conduct towards him last night."

"I am ready to render Mr. Crew an account of my conduct whenever he may require it," replied Philip haughtily.

"If you will follow my advice, sir, now that your prospects are fully settled, you will leave off these brawls altogether," observed Diggs. "If Mr. Randolph Crew threatens you with an assault, give him in charge of a constable, and leave the rest to me."

"I believe that will be the best plan," said Philip.

"Much the best for a coward to pursue—faugh!" exclaimed Jacob, with a look of supreme contempt.

Diggs and his companion then went downstairs to the cellar, where the bags of gold were still left, and having examined them, locked the door, and put seals upon it. This done, they repaired to the parlour, and Diggs, stepping up to Hilda, addressed her.

"Chancing to have your father's last will in my

pocket, Miss Scarve," he said, "I will read it to you—as the sooner you are made acquainted with his injunctions the better. Mr. Beechcroft, I also request your attention to the document; and you, too, Mrs. Clinton, that you may not afterwards plead ignorance of it."

And without further preliminary, he read the will.

"It is sufficiently intelligible, I must say," observed Abel, as he concluded; "and I must say also that I never listened to a more disgraceful document."

"You are at liberty to make any comment upon it you think fit, sir," said the attorney. "I am quite prepared for expressions of disappointment on your part."

"Why on my part, sir?" rejoined Abel.

"Because Mr. Scarve's wise disposition of his property has prevented you from securing it for your nephew, sir," replied the attorney.

A deep flush dyed Abel's pale cheek, and he fixed his kindling eye upon the attorney.

"Up to this point you have succeeded in your villainy, Mr. Diggs," he said, "but you may depend upon it, your triumph will be brief. That instrument will never hold good, and the manner in which you have obtained it, with other of your recent acts, will drive you from the profession, if they do not also banish you from the country."

"I laugh at your threats, sir," replied the attorney. "My position is too firm to be shaken by anything you can say or do. And you will find

this will equally firm. Its motive is too apparent to admit of dispute. My late respected and lamented client wished to marry his daughter to his nephew, and fearing that she would disobey his injunctions, took care that she should not do so without forfeiting his property. Mr. Scarve had a perfect right to do this. If Miss Scarve thinks otherwise, she can dispute the will. But she will find it as difficult to be set aside, as her father, while living, was to be turned from his purpose."

"I shall act strictly up to the conditions of my uncle's will," said Philip Frewin; "and it will be a matter of deep regret to me if my fair cousin should refuse to accede to them. I will not urge her at this moment, but will call again in the course of the day for her answer."

And with a supercilious bow, he took his departure with the attorney.

For some time after they were gone, not a word was uttered by the group left in the parlour. Abel was buried in deep thought, and neither of the others appeared inclined to break the silence.

At length Abel roused himself, and turning to Mrs. Clinton, requested to be left alone a few minutes with Hilda; the good lady immediately withdrew.

"It may be, Hilda," he said, in a voice of much emotion—"though God forbid it should be so—that the issue of this contest will be against us, and the will be declared valid. I cannot free myself from some misgivings."

"Nor I, sir," she replied; "and yet to show you how strangely and inconsistently my father has acted, you will see from this"—and she drew forth a slip of paper from her bosom—"that he was under an obligation to the late Mr. Crew to give me to his son Randolph, with a certain dowry."

Abel glanced over the document in surprise.

"Would I had seen this in his lifetime!" he said.

"But for his violence you would have seen it, sir," she replied. "I was about to show it you when you last saw him, and was only deterred by the state of excitement into which he was thrown."

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed Abel. "But perhaps the document may still be of use."

And he arose and paced the room to and fro, in extreme agitation. At last he stopped before Hilda, regarding her fixedly. "Answer me sincerely," he said, "do you love Randolph?"

"You need scarcely ask the question, sir," she rejoined, blushing.

"The match seems ordained by Heaven," cried Abel; "it is useless to oppose it. Listen to me, Hilda. I loved your mother—deeply, passionately loved her. By my own fault it seems—though I understood it not then—I lost her, and she became the bride of your father. From that time I was doomed to wretchedness, and though my sufferings were hidden under the mask of indifference, the vulture of despair was perpetually gnawing at my heart. During this dreadful period, when I hated

all mankind, and him most of all who I conceived had robbed me of what I held dearest on earth, you were born, and soon afterwards my sister, Mrs. Crew, gave birth to Randolph. It was whispered among our family that the two infants would suit each other, and that their union would reconcile old grievances. In the bitterness and anguish of my heart, I vowed that this should never happen, if I could prevent it; and for years I nourished the resolution, until it became rooted in my breast. Your mother died; and it might have been supposed that my sorrows and resentments would be buried in her grave; but it was not so. There are some loves, as there are some hatreds, that survive the tomb, and mine was one of them. Whatever brought her image to my mind gave me acute suffering, and I prohibited all who knew me, on pain of my displeasure, from alluding to her in any way. Thus little reached me of you or your father, till Randolph's arrival in town a few months since. To my surprise I found he had seen you; and from the manner in which he spoke of you, I perceived that he was smitten by your charms."

Hilda uttered a slight exclamation.

"I will not disguise from you," pursued Abel, "that this discovery gave me inexpressible uneasiness, and I sought by every means in my power to prevent him from seeing you again. But fate had decreed it otherwise. Chance brought you together again and again, until the final adventure at Vauxhall seemed to link your affections together indissolubly."

"It did so," observed Hilda.

"Notwithstanding all this, I could not bring myself to consent to your marriage," continued Abel; "nay, I determined to cast off Randolph for ever if he disobeyed me. My resolution was somewhat shaken by your father's illness, and I began to find my dislike to the connection abating. Can you understand these contradictory feelings, Hilda, for I loved you all the time?"

"I can, sir," she replied.

"That which alone removed my objection," said Abel sternly, "was the sad spectacle I beheld in the cellar this morning. After the sight I there witnessed, I could not retain further animosity against the author of my misery. I can now review the past with calmness. I can now think of your mother without pain, and of your father without heart-burning; I can now love you as their child, without other feelings obtruding upon me." And opening his arms, he folded Hilda in a strict embrace.

"Bless you! bless you, my child!" he cried. "If Randolph proves worthy of you, he shall have you."

Hilda averted her head, and there was silence between them for a brief space.

"You wished to have some communication with my poor father before his death," she said, at length. "I hope it was not of importance?"

"Only to himself," replied Abel, with a deep sigh. "I wished to forgive him for prevailing upon me, under the garb of friendship, to introduce him to your mother and her family. I

wished to forgive him for the arts he used to wean her affections from me; for his misrepresentation of my circumstances and character; and for the prolonged anguish he occasioned me, and to which death would have been preferable. I wished to say thus much to him—to hear from his own lips an avowal of his regret—and to be at peace with him for ever!”

“You are at peace with him now, sir, I trust,” said Hilda.

“As far as I, myself, am concerned, I am so,” replied Abel; “but for you——”

“Oh, do not think of me!” cried Hilda. “I forgive him from the bottom of my heart. He has been the dupe of others.”

“Say rather he has been the bond-slave of Mammon,” replied Abel sternly, “who has destroyed him, as he destroys all his worshippers. But I will not pain you by any harsh reflections. Be assured, nothing shall be neglected to repair the injury he has done you. And now, farewell, my dear child, since you decide upon remaining here. I will see you again in the later part of the day; and, meantime, you stand in need of some repose.”

And folding her once more in his arms, he took his leave.

XIV

*Philip Frewin is dangerously wounded by Randolph
—His last Vindictive Effort.*

RANDULPH'S feelings on awaking and finding himself in the watch-house were at first humiliating and full of self-reproach. But by degrees these milder sentiments speedily gave way to anger against Philip Frewin, and so indignant did he become, on reflection, at the conduct of the latter, that he resolved that his first business, on obtaining his freedom, should be to seek him out and call him to a strict account. His wrath had by no means abated as Mr. Foggo entered the chamber, a little before eight o'clock, to call him and his companion.

"I hope you rested well, gen'l'men," said the constable, with a somewhat malicious grin. "Will you please to have breakfast?"

"Not here, Mr. Foggo," replied Trussell, yawning. "I think you said, last night—or else I dreamt it—that it wouldn't be necessary to go before a magistrate?"

"I think it may be managed, sir," said the constable, "provided—ahem!"

"Provided we come down—eh, Mr. Foggo?" rejoined Trussell.

"Exactly, sir," replied the other.

"Do not bribe him, uncle," cried Randolph indignantly. "We have been most unjustifiably

detained, and I wish to be taken before a magistrate, that I may have an opportunity of complaining of the shameful treatment we have experienced, as well as of preferring a charge against Philip Frewin."

"Be advised by me, my dear boy, and make no further disturbance about the matter," replied Trussell. "You'll get no redress."

"But, uncle——"

"Between ourselves," interrupted Trussell, "I would rather the affair didn't come to the ears of my brother Abel, which, if we're publicly examined, will unquestionably be the case."

"That's why I recommend you not to go before his worship," observed the cunning constable; "it may be disagreeable in its consequences."

"To be sure it may," replied Trussell, slipping a guinea into his hand. "Let us out as fast as you can."

"I shall not move," said Randulph.

"Oh! it's quite optional," said Mr. Foggo, evidently disconcerted.

"I shall go, at all events," said Trussell.

"And so shall I," said Jacob. "I shall get back to my poor master as fast as I can. Lord knows what may have happened in my absence."

"Well, if you're both going, I must perforce accompany you," said Randulph; "but I protest against the step."

Mr. Foggo attended them to the door of the watch-house, and made them a polite bow as he let them out.

Taking a hasty leave of the others, Jacob set off

to the Little Sanctuary, where, it is needless to say, a painful surprise awaited him.

As they walked along, Trussell proposed that they should breakfast at a coffee-house, and put their toilette a little in order before going home; and Randolph, recollecting that Jacob had mentioned the Crown Inn, Ox Yard, as a place frequented by Philip Frewin, suggested that they should go there. Trussell being perfectly agreeable to the arrangement, they bent their steps in that direction.

On arriving at the Crown, and inquiring for Philip, they learnt that he had rooms in the house, but had been out the greater part of the night, and was absent at the time. He was, however, momentarily expected, and the waiter promised to let them know when he returned.

Trussell then ordered a good breakfast, to which, after making their toilettes, they both did ample justice. At the expiration of an hour, Randolph renewed his inquiries about Philip. Still he had not returned.

"Well, if you like to wait here for him," said Trussell, "I will go home, and make some excuse for you, and will return and tell you what I have done."

The desire of avenging himself on Philip Frewin being now paramount in Randolph's breast, he readily assented to this plan, and Trussell departed.

Having fee'd the waiter, to insure the accomplishment of his object, Randolph flung himself into a seat, and was musing over the events of the previous

night, by way of keeping up his choler against Philip, when the door suddenly opened, and a man, stepping into the chamber, was about to withdraw, with an apology for his intrusion, when a cry from Randolph, who recognised him as Cordwell Firebras, checked him.

"What! is it you, Randolph!" cried Firebras, holding out his hand. "I came here to meet another person, but you are the man of all others I most wished to see. What the deuce are you doing here?"

"I am waiting to see Philip Frewin," replied Randolph. "He served me a scurvy trick last night, and got me shut up in the watch-house, and I mean to chastise him."

"I shan't hinder your laudable design," replied Firebras, laughing. "But," he added, closing the door, "I was about to send to you on a matter of the utmost importance. I have a proposal to make to you that affects your nearest and dearest interests. Come to me at the Chequers Inn, Millbank, a little before midnight, and I will give you proof that I hold your fortune in my hands."

"To be obtained on the same terms as heretofore?" demanded Randolph.

"Hear what I've got to propose, and then inquire the conditions," rejoined Firebras.

"Well, I will come," replied Randolph.

As he said this, the waiter entered the room, and made a sign to him that his man had arrived.

Randolph's eyes sparkled, and without saying a word, he beckoned Firebras to follow him, and,

directed by the waiter, proceeded to Philip's room, which immediately adjoined his own.

Philip was not alone, he was attended by Captain Culpepper, and was laughingly counting out a sum of money for him. But his glee died away on beholding Randolph's stern looks, and he would have beaten a retreat if Firebras had not closed the door, and planted his bulky person before it.

"What do you want here, sir?" he cried, in as fierce a tone as he could command, to Randolph. "This is my room—you have no business here. Ring the bell, Captain Culpepper."

"If the captain stirs, I will cut his throat," cried Firebras.

"If I treat you as a gentleman, scoundrel, it is more than you deserve," said Randolph fiercely; "but I demand instant satisfaction for your conduct last night."

"I can't fight to-day, Mr. Crew," said Philip. "I'm engaged on particular business, as this gentleman knows. To-morrow, at any hour you please."

"This is a pitiful evasion, coward!" cried Randolph; "but it shall not avail you." And he struck him with the flat of his sword.

"Sblood, sir, hold your hand!" cried Captain Culpepper, whipping out his blade, and interposing. "Leave off this game, or, by my troth, I'll slit your weasand for you."

"No, you won't, captain," said Cordwell Firebras, stepping forward. "Let them settle the matter themselves. If Mr. Frewin is a gentleman, he will give Mr. Crew satisfaction; and if he is *not*, you

must agree with me, as a man of honour, that no punishment can be too degrading for him."

"I must confess there is reason in what you say, sir," replied Culpepper. "Fight him, sir—fight him!" he whispered to Philip. "I'll help you if you require it."

"Hold your hand, ruffian!" cried Philip, exasperated by the treatment he had experienced, "and look to yourself." And, drawing his sword, he attacked Randolph with the utmost fury.

It was evident, from his style of fencing, that Philip did not want skill; but his passion robbed him of judgment, and he frequently exposed himself to his antagonist, who fought with great coolness, evidently meaning to disarm him, or at most slightly wound him.

Desirous, at length, of putting an end to the conflict, Randolph assailed his adversary more vigorously, and was driving him towards the wall, when footsteps were heard hurrying along the passage. Firebras turned to lock the door to prevent interruption, and while he was thus engaged, Culpepper made a thrust at Randolph, which, fortunately, the latter was able to avoid by a sudden spring backwards.

Exasperated by this treachery, Randolph dexterously parried a thrust in carte from Philip, and instantly returning the pass, his point plunged deeply into the other's breast. Philip staggered, and would have fallen if Culpepper had not caught him.

"Don't mind me," cried the wounded man,

"attack him!—attack him! I'll give you a thousand pounds if you kill him."

"I can't do it now, sir," whispered Culpepper. "I fear you are seriously hurt."

"Yes, it's all over," groaned Philip. "Curse him, the luck's always on his side."

Meanwhile, Cordwell Firebras had rushed up to Randolph, who looked stupefied at the result of the encounter.

"Get off as fast as you can," he cried; "it won't do to be taken just now. The window in that closet is open, and you are young and active, and can easily reach the ground. Repair to the Chequers at once, and keep close all day. I'll be with you before midnight."

Throwing one look of compassion at the wounded man, Randolph darted into the closet, and peeping out of the window, perceived that it looked upon the roof of a shed. Dropping upon this building, he gained a narrow alley which led him into King Street.

As soon as Randolph had made good his retreat, Firebras opened the door, and gave admittance to the landlord and some half-dozen attendants. A surgeon was instantly sent for, and Philip placed in a chair, while Cordwell Firebras assisted in bandaging up the wound. It bled internally, and Firebras's experience told him it was highly dangerous.

"What do you think of my hurt?" asked Philip, whose aspect had already become ghastly and cadaverous.

"I'll not deceive you," replied Firebras; "you're a dead man."

"But my murderer will be hanged for it, won't he?" cried Philip, with a malignant look.

"You were fairly hit," replied Firebras. "If anybody deserves hanging, it's Captain Culpepper. I saw the foul blow he aimed at Randolph."

At this moment, Diggs entered the room, and was horror-stricken at beholding the condition of Philip Frewin.

"Why, what dreadful mischance is this?" he cried, gazing at him. "I hope you are not seriously hurt?"

"They tell me I am mortally wounded," replied Philip, with a groan; "and I believe they're right. I have only been made my uncle's heir to mock me."

"What! is Mr. Scarve dead?" cried Firebras, in surprise.

"He died last night," replied the attorney, "and Mr. Frewin, as he has just told you, is his heir, provided Hilda refuses to marry him."

"The devil!" exclaimed Firebras; "this has been a lucky blow for Randolph. I'm glad he was not aware of the fact, or the thing might have looked like premeditation."

"Get me a chair, Diggs, instantly!" cried Philip, "and take me to the Little Sanctuary. I will see Hilda before I die, and, if she refuses to marry me, I'll make my will at once. I have strength to sign it."

"What madness is this?" cried Firebras.

"It's no madness," replied the other. "Get me a chair—quick—quick!"

Thus exhorted, Diggs gave the necessary instructions, and shortly afterwards a chair was brought into the room by two porters, and the wounded man placed in it. Attended by Firebras, Diggs, Culpepper, and Mr. Molson, who chanced to be the nearest surgeon, and who had just arrived—he was transported to the miser's dwelling.

On arriving there, Cordwell Firebras hastily explained to Jacob, who answered the knock at the door, the object of their coming, and bade him urge his young mistress to see the wounded man.

As soon as he had satisfied himself of the truth of the statement, which was so extraordinary that he could scarcely credit it, Jacob directed the chairmen to bring their burden along the passage into the parlour, and Philip Frewin was got out and placed in the miser's old seat. The chairmen then withdrew, and Jacob ran upstairs to tell Hilda what had occurred, while Mr. Molson said to Philip—

"If you have any instructions to give, sir, you must not lose time, for you have not many minutes to call your own."

"Where is Hilda?" cried the wounded man. "Get pen, ink, and paper, Diggs—sit down—and write what I tell you. Is she come yet?"

"Yes, she is here," replied Firebras, as Hilda entered the room. "Miss Scarve," he added, stepping up to her, "your cousin has been desperately wounded in a duel with Randolph Crew. He

has not many minutes to live. Accede to what he proposes to you," he added, in a low tone.

"Hilda," said Philip, in a faint voice, "I have sent for you to ask you, in the presence of these witnesses, whether you consent to marry me?"

"You are not in a state to ask the question," she replied, with a look of mingled commiseration and abhorrence. "Think of reconciling yourself with Heaven."

"Do you refuse?" cried Philip, trying to raise himself.

"If you exert yourself in this way, you will only accelerate your end," said the surgeon.

"I *will* have an answer," replied Philip—"yes or no?"

"Consent," whispered Firebras to Hilda. "It can matter nothing."

"I cannot bring my lips to utter the word," she replied.

"I require an answer, Miss Scarve," said Diggs, "as it may affect Mr. Frewin's interest in the property, and your own."

"Then I answer, No," she replied firmly.

Cordwell Firebras bit his lips.

"Take down that answer, Diggs," said Philip.

The attorney complied, and when done, requested Culpepper and the surgeon to witness it, which they did.

"Now, Mr. Frewin, you are in possession of your uncle's property," said Diggs.

"Then write out a bequest of it all," said Philip—"of all, mind—to—to—to——"

"To whom, sir?" asked Diggs, writing with the greatest rapidity, for he saw that he had not a moment to spare.

"To yourself," faintly replied the dying man.

In a few seconds, without looking up, or exhibiting any sign of satisfaction, the attorney completed his task.

"It is done—sign it, sir," he added, placing the paper before Philip, and giving him the pen, which the latter could scarcely grasp. It was a moment of breathless interest to all; and even Hilda bent forward.

"Where is it?" groaned Philip, trying to fix his glazing eyes on the paper.

"Here, sir—here," said Diggs, putting his finger on the place where the signature should be affixed.

But it was too late. The pen fell from Philip's grasp, and, falling with his face on the table, he expired.

"Another moment, and I had been master of this property," cried Diggs, snatching up the unsigned paper.

"You could not have kept it," said Cordwell Firebras.

"Long enough to have answered my purpose," rejoined the attorney, putting on his hat, and quitting the house. He was followed in his retreat by Captain Culpepper.

"You are now undisputed mistress of your inheritance, Hilda," said Cordwell Firebras.

"Heaven be praised for it!" exclaimed Jacob. "I knew such wrongful acts would never prosper."

"To me the event is most fortunate," said Hilda ;
"but I wish it could have been purchased at a less price than the life of my unfortunate cousin."

"I confess I cannot pity him," said Firebras.
"But you must now think of yourself. You look very pale."

"This last strange trick of fortune is almost too much for me," she rejoined.

"I would recommend you to seek an asylum with some friend, while the last mournful duties to your father are performed," said Firebras. "Why not go to Mr. Beechcroft's? Randolph's mother is there."

"I think I will follow your advice," replied Hilda ; "for I cannot remain here after the shocking event that has just occurred."

"Mrs. Clinton and I will take care of the house and property," said Jacob. "I'll go and fetch a coach directly, if you're going to Mr. Beechcroft's."

And he set out on his errand, while Hilda went upstairs to her room, to make a few hasty preparations for her departure. This done, she entered the room in which her father's remains were laid, and kneeling beside the bed, prayed fervently. She then gazed for a few moments on his wan emaciated features, now rendered yet sharper by death, and pressing her lips upon them, quitted the room. Cordwell Firebras led her in silence to the coach, in which Jacob put the few things she took with her.

"Where is Mr. Randolph?" asked the latter, as he was about to mount the box.

"Do you know a summer-house on the banks of the river, near the mill, in Millbank?" asked Firebras.

"What, belongin' to the Chequers Inn!" rejoined Jacob. "I *should* know it, seein' as how I've passed many a pleasant hour in it."

"Well, be in a boat off it at midnight," rejoined Firebras, "and you'll hear something of Randolph."

"I won't fail," replied Jacob, springing on the box, and ordering the coachman to drive to Lambeth, while Firebras returned to the house to give some directions to Mrs. Clinton.

XV

Mr. Cripps' Altered Appearance—He mystifies the Fair Thomasine about Lady Spinke—The Seizure of the Jacobite Club contrived.

ON the same morning as the events previously related, while Peter Pokerich was powdering a barber's wig, he was interrupted in his task by the sudden and rather distracted entrance of the fair Thomasine.

"What's the matter, Tommy, dear?" he inquired, unintentionally puffing a great quantity of powder into her face. "Ten thousand pardons, but you quite startled me, and made me miss my aim."

"You've nearly blinded me, you careless thing," replied the fair Thomasine, rubbing her eyes; "besides spoiling my fly-cap, and filling my hair with your nasty powder. But have you heard the dreadful—the distressing news?"

"No," replied Peter. "What is it?"

"Mr. Scarve has been found dead in his cellar," replied the fair Thomasine, in a sepulchral tone, suited to the nature of her information—"where he had digged his own grave, and tried to bury himself, to save funeral expenses."

"Lord bless us! you don't say so!" exclaimed Peter.

"Yes, I do," rejoined the fair Thomasine; "but turn your powder-puff the other way, or you'll miss your aim again. I shouldn't have been sorry for anything that happened to him—but what do you think?—he's disinherited his own daughter, and left all his property to his nephew."

"Oh, the horrid, unnatural old monster!" exclaimed Peter, capering about, and completely emptying the powder-puff in his agitation.

"Be quiet, do, and stand still!" said the fair Thomasine, taking hold of his collar and keeping him down. "Poor Hilda's not to have a farthing unless she marries that odious cousin of hers; and, if I'm not greatly mistaken in her, she'll die sooner than consent."

"Of course she will!" cried Peter, still plying the exhausted powder-puff. "Oh, she's a noble creature, and quite an example to her sex!"

"So I think," replied the fair Thomasine; "and till she marries Randolph Crew, I don't marry you—that's positive! Oh gemini! if there isn't Mr. Cripps. How altered he is, to be sure."

The latter exclamation was occasioned by the entrance of the ex-valet, who was indeed so much changed as scarcely to be recognisable. His coat

was threadbare, out-at-elbows, and with the lace upon it tarnished; his waistcoat was in the same tattered condition; his nether garments were be-patched with cloths of various hues; his hose were no longer silk, but cotton very much darned; and steel buckles replaced the diamond appendages to his shoes. His dishevelled peruke stood sadly in need of the aid of Peter Pokerich; his hat was an old cocked one, with one of the sides broken and hanging loose; and a switch supplied the place of his clouded cane. He had no lace at his wrists or at his breast; indeed, it was rather questionable, from the manner in which he buttoned up his coat, whether he had a shirt at all.

Fallen, however, as he was, Mr. Cripps was Mr. Cripps still. He wore his tattered apparel with as great an air as distinguished him when equipped in all his finery; flourished his switch as if it had been a magnificent baton; took snuff out of a pewter box with as much grace as when he manipulated one set with brilliants; and brushed away the powder with a ragged handkerchief as airily as when he boasted a perfumed and embroidered mouchoir.

"The fair Thomasine, as I live," he said, with a diving bow. "How charmingly you look, 'pon rep! I've just been to Sir Singleton Spinke's, to offer myself as valet. But he has heard of my cussed adventure, and won't engage me."

"Did you see Lady Spinke?" asked the fair Thomasine.

"To be sure," replied Mr. Cripps, "and can report very favourably of her condition. Her old

lord dotes on her. She has large monkeys and little dogs, black pages and white china, gold and silver dresses, diamonds, rubies, garnets, pearls, emeralds—everything, in short, that one of your sex can desire.”

“Except a young husband,” interposed Peter. “I wish my powder-puff was full,” he added aside; “I’d empty it into his mischievous throat and choke him.”

“Young husbands!—fiddlestick!” cried Mr. Cripps. “Lady Spinke is a great deal too good a judge for that. She would rather be an old man’s darling than a young man’s warling, as the proverb hath it. And she’s right, i’faith. She twists her old lord round her fingers as easily as a glove.”

“Just what I should like to do with my husband,” cried the fair Thomasine.

“You shall twist me round your fingers as easily as you please, my angel,” cried Peter distractedly. “Plague take him! what can have brought the fellow here?”

“Her ladyship, I needn’t say, has quitted the stage,” pursued Mr. Cripps. “I heard them talking of going to Ranelagh to-night.”

“Ranelagh!” sighed the fair Thomasine. “How delightful! And I’ve never been there since the masquerade, and I begin to fear I shall never go there again!”

“Delightful, indeed! if it only lasts!” said Mr. Cripps, who had received a secret sign from the barber.

"Lasts! what do you mean?" cried the fair Thomasine.

"Why, between ourselves," replied Mr. Cripps, with a laugh, "Sir Singleton has had eleven wives already—eleven Lady Spinkes, by this light! The present lady is the twelfth. They were all married at the Fleet."

"Oh gemini! twelve wives!" exclaimed the fair Thomasine. "What a shocking old Turk!"

"You would say so, if you knew the history of the former Lady Spinkes's as well as I do," replied Mr. Cripps. "There were actresses, singers, operadancers, mantua-makers, corset-makers, glove-makers, satin-shoemakers, embroiderers, and ladies of other vocations that I forget—but all young, and all very pretty—ha! ha! Why, they all came in a body to call upon him, the day after his marriage, and it took half-a-dozen constables to get them out of the house."

"And if they had torn out his wicked old eyes they would have served him right!" cried the fair Thomasine. "I've no patience with such doings. Twelve wives. Why, it's as bad as a seraglio!"

"Are you now satisfied that you're not one of them, my angel?" asked the little barber.

"That I am," she replied; "but I still adhere to my resolution of not marrying you till Hilda Scarve is united to Randolph. Good morning, Mr. Cripps."

The ex-valet made one of his best bows, and handed her to the door. "Cudslid! you ought to thank me, Pokerich," he said, laughing; "the

twelve wives did the business—put her out of conceit with the old knight, eh?”

“You did it capitally,” replied Peter; “and now what can I do for you in return?”

“A good deal,” replied Mr. Cripps. “In the first place, you can dress my peruke, which, as you perceive, is cussedly out of order; in the second, you can perfume me; and in the third, you can lend me five guineas, for I haven’t a rap to bless myself withal.”

“As to dressing your wig, that I’ll do with pleasure,” replied the barber; “and I’ll perfume you into the bargain. But I haven’t five pounds to spare—I haven’t, ’pon rep!”

“Don’t steal my adjurations, at all events,” cried Mr. Cripps; “they’re the only part of my former self I have left. Devil knows what will become of me. My master won’t give me a character. I’ve lost the twenty guineas lent me by my uncle at the gaming-table, and I can’t even borrow a pistol and a prad to help me to take a purse.”

A person entering the shop at this moment, Mr. Cripps walked aside, while the barber, offering his customer a chair, went in the back room in search of a full-bottomed black wig. On more narrowly examining the new-comer, Mr. Cripps recognised the Jesuit priest, Father Verselyn, and it instantly occurred to him that he could turn the discovery to account. Accordingly, he stepped quickly up to him, and said, in a low tone—

“Glad to see you, Father Verselyn—pray sit still, sir. How gets on the good cause, eh?”

"You are mistaken in me, friend," replied the priest uneasily.

"I will soon prove the contrary, sir," rejoined Mr. Cripps, assuming a different tone. "Unless you tell me where the club now meets, I'll make you my prisoner."

The priest trembled violently.

"Answer me directly," cried Mr. Cripps, "or I call the barber to my assistance."

"At the Chequers, in Millbank," replied the priest.

"I'll have better assurance than your word," replied Mr. Cripps. "When is the next meeting?"

"To-night," replied the priest.

"Now I tell you what, father," said Mr. Cripps, "I can get three hundred pounds for their capture. You shall share it with me. No buts. A Jesuit never hesitated to betray his friends when it answered his purpose. Choose between a good reward and a prison. But here comes the barber. Do you consent?"

The Jesuit nodded.

Having settled his affairs with the barber, Father Verselyn quitted the shop, while Mr. Cripps, making a sign to Peter that he had business on hand, instantly followed him, and soon found that there was no indisposition on the priest's part to join in the scheme, provided he could do so with safety to himself.

Discussing their project, they proceeded towards Millbank, and it was arranged, on the suggestion

of Verselyn, that the landlord of the Chequers, who was, no other than the former host of the Rose and Crown, should be included in their design, and receive a third of the reward.

XVI

*The Summer-House at the Chequers—The Old Mill—
Randulph overhears the Plot—Dispersion of the
Jacobite Club, and Fate of Cordwell Firebras.*

As Randulph passed through the Little Sanctuary, on his way to Millbank, he paused for a moment before the dwelling of the unfortunate miser. Ignorant of the catastrophe that had occurred there during the night, he could not help thinking that the house had a drearier look than usual; but attributing the notion to his own gloomy thoughts, he attached little importance to it, and passed on.

On gaining Millbank, he speedily discovered the Chequers, and entering the house, recognised his old acquaintance, the former landlord of the Rose and Crown. The latter, however, did not recollect him, but eyed him rather suspiciously, till Randulph told him he came recommended by Mr. Cordwell Firebras.

"Hush!" exclaimed the host. "He's only known as Captain Vizard here. My right name is Tom Wiles, but I'm now called Dick Chinnock. I fancy I've seen you before, sir."

"I was introduced to the club when it met at
VOL. II. q

your house in Gardiner's Street, Petty France," replied Randolph, "on the night when the members were pursued by the guard."

"And an unlucky night it was!" exclaimed Chinnoek. "We've never prospered since. I remember you now. I hope you won't bring the same ill-luck again. How soon will the captain be here, sir?"

"Not before midnight, I believe," replied Randolph, "and as I'm a good deal fatigued, I should like to go to bed for a few hours. I wish to be as private as possible."

"I'll get a bed ready for you directly, sir," replied the host; "and in the meantime, perhaps you'll step this way." And passing through a back door, he crossed a little garden, at the lower end of which stood a little square summer-house, with a pointed tiled roof, surmounted by a vane. It overlooked the river, and on this side there was a platform, protected by a railing, with steps descending to the water's edge. On the left stood an old mill—a tall, picturesque wooden structure. Between the summer-house and the mill flowed a small brook, which turned a large water-wheel, connected with the latter building. At the back of the mill, over a dense mass of habitations, could be distinguished the towers of Westminster Abbey.

Having shown Randolph into the summer-house, the landlord promised to let him know as soon as his bed was ready, and left him. The little chamber was furnished with a small deal table, painted green, and a couple of chairs. Its internal decorations

were much injured by damp and neglect. The gay paintings on the walls and ceiling were nearly effaced; the gilding had turned black; and the looking-glasses were so dim that they scarcely reflected an object.

As Randolph, after taking a momentary survey of the room, was about to seat himself, he noticed a ring in the floor, concealed by a bit of carpet, which he removed, and perceived that it covered a trap-door. Impelled by curiosity, he lifted the latter by means of the ring, and discovered a lower chamber, accessible by a ladder placed against the stout pile supporting the floor. There appeared to be nothing in it; and satisfied with the discovery he had made, Randolph closed the trap-door, and restored the carpet to its original position. Drawing his chair to a little window on the left, he threw it open, and amused himself by examining the old mill. A small vessel was moored in front of it, apparently filled with sacks of corn and straw, which some of the crew were unloading.

While watching these proceedings, Randolph could not help suspecting (though he scarcely knew why) that some underhand business was going forward. The sacks were teagled to the upper storey of the mill, and one of them chancing to fall, proved by its sound that its contents were not what they seemed. The trusses of straw, too, seemed oddly shaped, and Randolph persuaded himself that muskets and other arms were concealed within them.

If he had not felt quite certain that these pro-

ceedings had some connection with the Jacobite cause, a circumstance that occurred almost immediately afterwards would have satisfied him of the fact.

One of the crew in the little vessel, observing him at the window of the summer-house, made various signs to him, which, though he could not precisely interpret, he understood to bear relation to the articles they were landing, as well as to their object. Soon after this, Mr. Chinnock presented himself, and apologising for his delay, said—

“The only bedroom I have is engaged by an invalid; but I’ve made you up a nice bed on the sofa, in a snug little closet, where no one will disturb you.”

Following the host into the house, Randolph was shown into a closet opening into a larger room, where, as had been stated, a sofa-bed was prepared. He threw himself upon it, without undressing, and presently fell asleep. How long he remained in this state he knew not, but he was awakened by the sound of muttered voices in the next apartment, and became an involuntary listener to their discourse.

“They will all be here at midnight,” said a voice, “and you may capture them without difficulty.”

“If we do, sir,” replied another, “your reward is certain, though you are a Jesuit priest. I shall bring a strong party of men with me.”

“And I’ll take care to admit them,” said a third, whose voice Randolph recognised as that of the landlord, “provided you promise me a third of the

reward, and undertake that I shall not be implicated in the matter."

"I give you my word, as an officer in his majesty's grenadier guards, that it shall be so," rejoined the previous speaker; "and that is better than the written engagement of any Jacobite."

"The reward is three hundred pounds," said a sharp conceited voice. "That's one hundred to Mr. Chinnoek, another hundred to Father Verselyn, and a third to me. Is that distinctly understood?"

"Distinctly, Mr. Cripps," replied the officer, "provided I take them."

"Yes, of course," said the landlord; "but you can't fail to do so, if you follow my instructions. I'll put them into your hands."

"Can't you come down with something beforehand, captain?" asked Mr. Cripps.

"Not with a crown," replied the officer. "I have already pledged my word that you shall receive the reward, and that must content you. It is as much as traitors can expect," he added, with a contemptuous laugh.

"You'll take care that I am not injured?" said the Jesuit.

"I'll do my best," replied the officer; "but you must look to yourself. And now to arrange our plans. As soon as it gets dark, I'll place half-a-dozen of my grenadiers, under the care of Tom Pratt (Long Tom, as the men call him), in the summer-house, near the river. They'll cut off their retreat, if any should be attempted, by that way."

"Long Tom and his men must hide themselves in the lower room of the summer-house, till Captain Vizard—I mean Cordwell Firebras—has made his search," said Chinnock. "He's sure to be here the first, and, if he's seized too soon, you may lose the others."

"I must have the whole pack, or you don't get the reward," said the officer.

"There's a young man asleep in that closet, sent by the captain," said the landlord. "I'm not quite sure that he's a Jacobite. What shall we do with him?"

"Detain him," replied the officer. "I hold you responsible for his safe custody."

"But he's a stout resolute fellow," said Chinnock, "and may get off, in spite of me."

"I'll leave you a couple of my grenadiers," replied the officer. "They'll remain in the bar, like chance customers. Call them, if you require assistance."

After a little further conversation, which Randolph could not catch, they separated, and he began to reflect upon the new posture of affairs. He was now involved in a fresh difficulty, from which he did not see how he could escape.

Though anxious to warn Cordwell Firebras and the other Jacobites of their danger, he felt it would be almost impracticable. Any attempt at flight from the house must be attended with great risk, after the precaution taken by the others to prevent it, and he finally resolved to let things take their course, and to be guided in his plan of action by circumstances.

Determined however, to ascertain whether his

movements were watched, he walked forth, and proceeded towards the summer-house. The host was instantly at his side, and he caught a glimpse of Mr. Cripps in the doorway, and behind him the two grenadiers. Taking no sort of notice of these hostile preparations, he talked indifferently to the landlord, and presently returned with him to the house, and ordered some refreshment.

Evening, at length, arrived, and as it grew dusk, Randolph gazed into the garden, and perceived the figures of the grenadiers, headed by Long Tom, steal off towards the summer-house. He also fancied he saw others station themselves at the side of the brook running between the inn garden and the mill-yard, and he had no doubt the street door was guarded in a similar manner. The trap was thus completely set, and he trembled to think what might be the fate of those for whom, however he differed with them in political opinions, he still entertained a strong friendship.

Slowly as the hours had hitherto passed, the interval between this time and that appointed for the arrival of Cordwell Firebras appeared yet more tedious. Twelve o'clock came—half-past—and yet none of the club had arrived; and Randolph began to hope that they had received some intimation of the plot against them.

The same idea apparently occurred to the landlord, for he became very fidgety, and kept coming constantly into Randolph's room, asking whether he knew what could be the cause of Captain Vizard's being so late.

"I'm afraid something must have happened to him and the other gentlemen," he said; "the captain is punctuality itself—and so indeed are they all. I wonder what can have occurred."

"Perhaps they may have been betrayed," said Randolph.

"I hope not!" cried the landlord; "if so, I should lose—my best friends," he added, correcting himself hastily.

"Do you expect Sir Norfolk Salusbury to-night?" asked Randolph.

"I did, sir," replied the landlord; "but I don't know what to think now."

"And Sir Bulkeley Price and Father Verselyn?"

"Both, sir," was the reply.

"Any others?" inquired Randolph.

"Several, I believe," returned the landlord. "A very full meeting of the club was expected. What *can* have kept them away? Ah! as I live, that's the captain's voice. All's right now." So saying, he rushed out, and presently afterwards returned, ushering in Cordwell Firebras. The latter looked greatly exhausted.

"Give me a cup of wine, landlord," he said; "I feel faint. I've had some hard work to do." The host instantly flew to a cupboard, and produced a flask and a large glass. Filling the latter, he presented it to Firebras, who emptied it at a draught.

"You are late to-night, captain," said the landlord. "I had almost given you up. Will the rest of the gentlemen be here?"

"I expect so," replied Firebras. "I thought they would have been here before me. Have you looked into the garden and the summer-house?"

"I have," replied the landlord.

"I'll go there myself," said the other, taking a brace of pistols from his pocket. "Stay where you are," he added to Randolph, who was about to follow him. Accompanied by the host, who carried a lantern, Firebras crossed the garden; but though he glanced around, he perceived nothing, and marched direct to the summer-house. On approaching it, Chinnock ran forward, and pretending to try the door, drew out the key, crying so as to be heard by those inside, "Dear me! it's locked—wait a minute, sir, and I'll fetch the key."

Without pausing for a reply, he darted off to the house. In a couple of minutes he returned, apologising to Firebras—whom he found impatiently pacing the platform in front of the summer-house, and gazing at the darkling tide flowing past him—for his delay, and unlocked the door. The summer-house was empty; the grenadiers had taken the hint, and descended to the lower chamber. A glance satisfied Firebras that all was right, and he returned slowly to the house, the landlord stamping upon the floor as he quitted the building, as a signal to the grenadiers that they might now come forth from their concealment. On reaching the house, Firebras dismissed the landlord, and going up to Randolph, clapped him on the shoulder, and said, "I have rare news for you."

"And I have rare news for you," replied the other.

"Hear mine first!" cried Firebras. "What if I tell you I am come to offer you your estates and the hand of Hilda, if you join the Jacobite party?"

"There would be no use in joining you now!" returned Randolph.

"You think I'm trifling with you!" cried Firebras, producing a packet; "but this will speak to the contrary. Here is the assignment of your estates to Isaac Isaacs. A receipt in full of all claims is attached to it. The deed is yours, provided you join us."

"You amaze me," cried Randolph, gazing at the packet; "that is unquestionably the deed I executed."

"Most certainly it is," replied Firebras. "It is too long a story to tell you how I became possessed of it," he added, replacing it in his pocket; "but I have other intelligence for you. Mr. Scarve is dead!" Randolph uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"He died last night," pursued Firebras, "and left his property to Philip Frewin in case of Hilda's refusal to marry him."

"But Philip may not live to claim the fulfilment of the condition," cried Randolph.

"Philip, also, is dead," replied Firebras. And smiling at Randolph's astonishment, he added, "Now you see that all is in your grasp. Fate has given you the lady of your love. I offer you your fortune. Can you refuse to join us?"

"Mr. Firebras," said Randolph, composing himself, "this is not the time to put such a question to me."

"Pardon me," cried Firebras sternly, "I must have an answer now—at this moment—or you lose your estates and Hilda for ever. Do not suppose I threaten lightly. I can, and will, make good my words."

"You mistake me altogether," rejoined Randolph. "I mean to say it would be useless for me to assent. You are betrayed."

"Betrayed!" exclaimed Firebras, in a voice of thunder. "How! by whom? But this is a mere assertion made to turn me from my purpose."

"You will find it too true," replied Randolph. "The house is environed on all sides by grenadiers."

"I have just visited the summer-house," said Firebras. "There was no one there."

"The men were concealed in a lower chamber," said Randolph.

"It may be so," cried Firebras, with a terrible imprecation. "But they shall not take me easily. My pistols! ha! they have been removed! The landlord, then, is our betrayer."

"He is," replied Randolph. "Your only chance of escape is apparent unconsciousness of the design. You might perhaps make good your own retreat—but the others——"

"I will never desert them," said Firebras. "There is a boat at hand, for I ordered Jacob Post to be in waiting for you off the summer-house, for another purpose, and I caught a glimpse of him just now. Ha! here come our friends." And, as he spoke,

Sir Norfolk Salusbury, Sir Bulkeley Price, Father Verselyn, Mr. Travers, and four or five other gentlemen entered the room.

"Leave us, landlord," said Firebras; "we will call you when we want you." And the order being obeyed, he bolted the door. "We are betrayed, gentlemen," said Firebras, in a low tone; "the house is surrounded by guards, and our retreat is cut off by the river."

As the words were uttered, the door was tried by some persons without, who, finding it fastened, proceeded to burst it open. "To the garden! to the garden!" cried Firebras. And the party made for the window.

Before, however, the whole of them could pass through it, the officer and a party of grenadiers burst open the door, and endeavoured to seize them.

Firebras and the others, with the exception of Randulph, drew their swords, and the next instant an encounter took place. But, as all was buried in darkness, little mischief was done. In spite of the efforts of the soldiers to prevent them, five or six of the Jacobites contrived to get across the ditch, and gaining the mill, took shelter within it. They were followed by a party of grenadiers, who fired a few shots at them. Whether the circumstance was the result of accident or design is immaterial, but a few minutes afterwards the mill was found to be on fire. Flames burst from the upper windows, throwing a fierce glare on the groups below, and brightly illumining the towers of Westminster Abbey.

Repeated loud explosions were next heard, threatening each moment to shake the mill to pieces; while some of the unfortunate Jacobites were seen springing from a side window upon the water-wheel, and trying to descend by it. Two others, at the risk of breaking their necks, dropped from a window facing the river, and endeavoured to gain the vessel moored beside it. The fugitives on the water-wheel were held in check by a party of grenadiers, who, having thrown a couple of planks over the little stream, were enabled to reach them.

Meanwhile, favoured by the previous darkness, for all was now as bright as day, Firebras, Salusbury, and the rest of the Jacobites made good their retreat as far as the summer-house. Some of them even managed to force their way to the platform. Here a desperate struggle took place, in which Sir Norfolk was severely wounded in the side by a bayonet. By this time the fire had broken out in the mill, and its glare showed Jacob at a little distance in a skiff. Notwithstanding the menaces of the soldiers, who pointed their guns at him, and threatened to fire if he approached nearer, Jacob pushed resolutely towards the summer-house.

He was now close under the platform, and made signs to Randolph to descend, but the latter would not desert Sir Norfolk, who had been seized by a couple of grenadiers. He threw himself upon the old baronet's captors, and in the struggle that ensued, the railing gave way, precipitating Sir

Bulkeley Price, the Jesuit, and the grenadiers into the tide. Before the other soldiers had recovered from their surprise at this occurrence, Randolph had lowered Sir Norfolk into the skiff, and sprung in after him.

Jacob's efforts to push off were impeded by Sir Bulkeley Price, who clung to the stern of the skiff, earnestly imploring them to take him in. Father Verælyn caught hold of the steps, and apprehensive of some further disaster, crept along the side of the summer-house, and took refuge in a small sewer, in the slime of which it is supposed he perished, for he was never heard of more.

Meanwhile, Cordwell Firebras—engaged hand to hand with the officer, who, having vainly summoned him to surrender, attacked him in person—had reached the platform. Seeing escape impossible, Firebras, while defending himself against the officer, called to Randolph, whom he descried below, and held out the packet to him. The latter ordered Jacob to keep the skiff steady, and to bring it as near the combatants as possible.

While Jacob obeyed the injunction, a successful thrust from Firebras stretched his adversary upon the platform, but the next moment he received his own death-wound from Long Tom, who stepped forward as his officer fell, and discharged his musket into his breast. With a dying effort, Firebras stretched his hand over the rail, and consigning the packet to Randolph, fell backwards into the water. Possessed of the packet, Randolph turned to the aid of Sir Bulkeley Price, and pulling him into the skiff, Jacob

instantly pushed off. Assisted by the stream, which ran very strong, they soon got under the sides of the vessel near the mill, and were sheltered from the fire of the soldiery.

Meanwhile, the conflagration raged fast and furiously, and before the skiff containing the fugitives had got half-way to Westminster Bridge, a tremendous explosion took place, scattering the blazing fragments of the old mill far and wide into the river.

XVII

In which the Wedding Day is fixed.

ABOUT three months after the events detailed in the preceding chapter, a family party were assembled in the dining-room of the house at Lambeth, consisting of Abel, Trussell, Mrs. Crew, and Hilda. The latter was dressed in deep mourning, and had a shade of melancholy on her countenance, which rather added to her beauty than detracted from it. She sat near Abel Beechcroft, who regarded her with parental affection; and whose features, having lost their somewhat cynical and saturnine cast, now expressed only benevolence and kindness.

Always placid and composed, Mrs. Crew looked more cheerful than before; and Trussell, who, indeed, was rarely out of humour, appeared in tiptop spirits. In short, a happier party never met together. Nor did their attendant, Mr. Jukes, appear a whit less contented.

"Well, my dear niece," said Trussell—"for so I shall make bold to call you, in anticipation of our intended relationship—we shall certainly have Randolph back to-day."

"This morning, do you think?" she rejoined.

"Why, no; possibly not till evening," said Trussell. "Ah, sir!" he added to Abel, "how different our nephew's present journey from Cheshire is from the last. Then he came with very little money in his pocket, and with very little prospect of getting any—deprived of his inheritance, and with no apparent prospect of its restitution. Now he arrives a wealthy man, with a prospect of such happiness before him as a king might envy!"

"It's a story to write in a book," said Mr. Jukes, rubbing his eyes.

"I fear the two months during which Randolph has been absent must have passed very slowly over your head, Hilda?" observed Abel. "I may ask you the question now that we shall so soon have him with us again."

"To say that I have not felt his absence, and wished for his return, would not be to speak the truth, sir," she replied; "but it would be equally untrue to say that I have not been happier during the period you mention than I ever was in my life. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, when I have experienced so much attention from you, from your brother, and from Mrs. Crew?"

"I'm sure there is nothing we wouldn't do to make you happy," said Mrs. Crew.

"Nothing!" cried Mr. Jukes emphatically—"nothing *we* wouldn't do."

"I beg pardon, Mr. Jukes," said Hilda; "I ought to have included you in the list of my kind friends."

"You make me proud to hear you say so," replied Mr. Jukes. "I told my master, long before things came to this, that nothing would make me so happy as to see you in this house, married to Mr. Randolph. And I told him also that we would have one of the upper rooms turned into a nursery, and that he should sit in an easy-chair, nursing a little Randolph, or a little Abel, as the case may be, with a Miss Hilda, or a Miss Sophia, playing beside him. Didn't I tell you that, sir?"

"You did—you did," replied Abel hastily.

"Get me some usquebaugh, Mr. Jukes," said Trussell, who almost choked himself with laughing at the butler's speech, while Hilda was covered with blushes, and Mrs. Crew looked a little confused. The order was promptly obeyed, and Trussell, as he raised the glass to his lips, said, "May I live to see the realisation of Mr. Jukes' wish!"

"I must drink that toast myself," said the butler, retiring to the sideboard.

"By-the-bye, Hilda," said Trussell, laughing, "I haven't told you what has become of your disconsolate suitor, Beau Villiers, who wouldn't be content till you had refused him half-a-dozen times. Disappointed in his hope of obtaining you, or rather your fortune, he laid siege to Lady Spinke, and has eloped with her to Paris!"

"A proper consummation to his folly," observed Abel.

"But the best is to come," pursued Trussell. "Sir Singleton's marriage, as you know, took place at the Fleet, and not having the fear of courts of law before his eyes, nor thinking it necessary to get a divorce, the old beau is actually going to marry again. And this time his choice has fallen upon—whom do you think?—Lady Brabazon!"

"I'm glad that odious woman's got rid of, in any way," said Mrs. Crew. "I never could endure her."

"By-the-bye, Mr. Jukes," said Trussell, laughing to himself at his sister's vivacity. "I never heard what became of your nephew, Mr. Cripps?"

"I'm happy to say he's a reformed character, sir," replied the butler. "He was mixed up in some way or other, I don't know how, with that Jacobite disturbance where Mr. Cordwell Firebras met his death, and received a very awkward wound, which put him in danger of his life. Since then he has become quite an altered person, and neither drinks, games, nor dresses, as he used to do. He's at present living with a very quiet family in Abingdon Street; and, as far as I can learn, is doing his duty."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Abel; "and since that is the case, I'll take care you shan't lose the twenty guineas you were foolish to lend him."

Mr. Jukes made a suitable acknowledgment.

The breakfast things were taken away, but the party were still chatting over the table, when the

door suddenly opened, and Randolph rushed into the room. He was in his travelling attire, and though somewhat embrowned, looked handsomer, Hilda thought, than she had ever seen him—except on the occasion of his first visit to her father's house. He was followed by Jacob Post, who had attended him in his journey, and who shook hands heartily with Mr. Jukes. Hilda, who had risen at Randolph's approach, was instantly locked in his embrace. The tears started to Abel's eyes as he regarded the meeting of the young couple; Mrs. Crew gazed at them with fond delight; but Trussell, who was not quite so much interested in lovers' meetings, availed himself of the opportunity of taking a pinch of snuff.

"Well, you're looking vastly well, Randolph, I must say," observed Trussell, after his nephew's affectionate greetings had gone all round. "I don't think the country has disagreed with you."

"It is the quiet life he has led there, brother, and the early hours he has kept, that have agreed with him," observed Abel.

"You are right, uncle," replied Randolph; "and I am now quite convinced, from the experiment I have just made, that a quiet life is more to my taste than a gay one."

"I am glad to hear you say so!" cried Abel.

Trussell made no remark, but he slightly shrugged his shoulders, and took an inordinate pinch of snuff.

"You don't believe me, I see, uncle," said Randolph, laughing. "But I assure you it is the case.

And I have no doubt I shall bring you to my opinion, when I get you down to Cheshire."

"When you *do* get me there, I've no doubt you will," replied Trussell, somewhat drily. "Town agrees with me perfectly. Every one to his taste."

"And your tenants were glad to see you, Randolph, I am sure," said his mother, taking his hand.

"They were, indeed!" replied Randolph; "and I never experienced greater gratification than when they were collected in the old hall, and I told them I was once more their landlord. Their shouts made the rafters ring again. They all wished to see their mistress that is to be," he continued, gazing tenderly at Hilda.

"And I see not why their satisfaction should be delayed," replied Abel. "The considerations of decorum that apply to others do not apply to Hilda. So much of her life has been passed in self-sacrifice and trouble, that the sooner she is recompensed for it the better."

"The best thing we can do is to leave the young couple alone together to fix the day," said Trussell. "Make it as early as you can, Randolph; and notwithstanding the objections I raised to the country just now, I shall be happy to spend a month or two with you at Crew Hall, whenever you choose to invite me."

"The house will always be your home, my dear uncle," said Randolph. "No one will be more welcome."

Acting upon Trussell's hint, the others then withdrew.

Though Randolph had a thousand things to say to Hilda, he could recollect none of them ; but perhaps the expressions of rapturous devotion he was able to utter were fully as agreeable to his listener's ears as any other kind of discourse he might have adopted. Thus more than half-an-hour passed away so swiftly, so delightfully, that the lovers did not know they had been alone many minutes, when they were interrupted by a discreet tap at the door.

"Come in," said Randolph.

"Beg pardon," said Mr. Jukes, cautiously obeying the summons, "but Miss Thomasine Deacle is without, and wishes to speak to Miss Scarve."

"With me!" exclaimed Hilda, in surprise.

"I told her you were engaged with Mr. Randolph—particularly engaged," replied the butler; "but she said she didn't mind that. She wants to see you on a matter material to her happiness."

"She is a strange creature," said Hilda, smiling at the recollection of her former interview with her. "I dare say she wants to tell me something about Peter Pokerich."

"Very likely," said the butler, "for he is with her."

"Well, let them come in," replied Hilda. And the next moment the fair Thomasine and the little barber were ushered into the room.

"I trust you will excuse this intrusion, Miss Scarve," said the fair Thomasine, who was a little

disposed to be in heroics; "but I have a favour to beg of you. You are aware of the admiration I have always entertained for you—of the devotion I have felt towards you——"

"I am quite sensible of both," interrupted Hilda, smiling; "but the favour?"

"After all, my heart fails me—I cannot ask it," said the fair Thomasine, turning away in confusion.

"I'll tell you what it is," interposed Peter; "she declares she'll never have me, unless we're married on the same day as you and Mr. Randolph."

"On the same day, and at the same church," said the fair Thomasine, exhibiting a face like a blush rose. "The favour I wished to ask you, was your consent to this arrangement. Peter met Mr. Randolph and Jacob crossing Westminster Bridge, on their return from Cheshire this morning, and we thought we had better lose no time in making the request."

"My consent was scarcely required," said Hilda; "but, as soon as the day is fixed, you shall know it."

"I hope it will be soon!" cried Peter; "I'm tired of being put off so often."

"It would ill become me to exhibit any impatience," said the fair Thomasine, casting down her eyes.

"I sympathise with their situation, Hilda," said Randolph, taking her hand. "Can we not give them an answer now? To-day is Thursday. Let it be Monday next."

"Oh yes, Monday, by all means!" cried Peter, jumping into the air, and clapping his hands.

"I dare not urge Miss Scarve to greater expedition," said the fair Thomasine, still looking down; "but——"

"Your answer!" cried Peter, throwing himself on his knees before Hilda.

"Yes, your answer!" cried the fair Thomasine, kneeling down beside Peter.

"You cannot resist these entreaties, Hilda," said Randolph, smiling.

"I cannot, indeed," she replied. "Be it as you propose."

"Our marriage will take place on Monday," said Randolph; "and we shall be united at the parish church at Lambeth."

"How charming!" cried Peter, rising, and assisting the fair Thomasine to her feet. "We can go there in a boat. Won't that be delightful?"

"I shall never forget this obligation, Miss Scarve," said the fair Thomasine, taking Hilda's hand, and pressing it to her lips; "and may the day you have fixed be productive of happiness to both of us. We deserve to be rewarded for the troubles we have experienced." And dropping a low curtsy to Randolph, she took her departure with Peter, who skipped out of the room scarcely able to contain himself for joy.

XVIII

Detailing an Event which may possibly have been anticipated from the Preceding Chapter.

We shall hurry over the intervening period as rapidly as the lovers themselves would have hurried it over, and proceed at once to the wished-for day.

A little before nine o'clock, on this eventful morning, Randolph, who had taken up his quarters with Sir Bulkeley Price, in Saint James's Square, entered the breakfast-room, arrayed in his bridal attire, which had been prepared for him by the skilful hands of Desmartins. He found Sir Bulkeley Price and Sir Norfolk Salusbury at the table—the latter having come up from Wales, whither he had retired to recruit himself after his wound, expressly to attend the ceremony. After receiving their congratulations, Randolph sat down with them, but as he could only swallow a cup of chocolate, he underwent much rallying on his want of appetite.

Breakfast over, the party drove to Whitehall Stairs, where a six-oared barge was in readiness to convey them across the river. Jacob Post was appointed coxswain of this barge, and he wore a waterman's coat of scarlet cloth, and velvet jockey-shaped cap of the same colour. The six rowers were attired in the same livery, and presented a very gay appearance.

The morning was bright and beautiful, and everything seemed to Randolph to participate in his

happiness. Each boat that passed them, seeing the purpose on which they were bent, cheered them cordially; and Jacob, who was greatly elated, returned their greetings lustily.

As they passed through Westminster Bridge, and shaped their rapid course to Lambeth, they passed a boat containing a couple in bridal attire, and rowed by watermen with favours in their caps. These were Mr. Rathbone and Mrs. Nettleship, who, having made a composition with their creditors, had come to the conclusion that the best thing they could do would be to fulfil their original agreement, and having heard that Randolph and Hilda were to be united at Lambeth, they determined, like Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine, to be married at the same time, and at the same church. The boats cheered each other as they passed. Shortly after this, they came up with a four-oared cutter, in which was a still more gaily dressed bridal party, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Deacle, the fair Thomasine, and Peter Pokerich. The sunny tresses, bright eyes, and dimpling cheeks of the bride attracted Sir Bulkeley's admiration, and he called out to Peter that he ought to consider himself a very happy man; to which the little barber replied, "that he was the happiest man in the world—Mr. Crew excepted."

Another cheering passed between the rowers; and Randolph's barge swept over the sparkling waters to the stairs near Lambeth Palace, where he and his companions disembarked.

As Abel Beechcroft was extremely well known and highly respected in the neighbourhood, great

preparations were made to lend éclat to his nephew's wedding. A band of music was stationed on a lighter moored near the stairs; and the lighter itself was hung all over with flags and streamers. The band was playing, the bells ringing, and as Randolph leaped ashore, a loud shout from the crowd collected to see him land, welcomed him, while many flattering comments, in no very low key, were made upon his handsome appearance by the female part of the assemblage. In passing towards his uncle's residence, Randolph noticed with interest a troop of pretty little girls with wreaths round their heads, and baskets of flowers in their hands, standing in the path leading to the church.

The party were admitted by Mr. Jukes, whose portly figure was well displayed in an expansive snowy waistcoat, a brown coat, spick and span new for the occasion, and a well-powdered bob-wig. The worthy butler gave Randolph a hearty welcome, and wished him many years of happiness, and having ushered him and the others into the parlour, returned to the hall to Jacob, to give him wedding favours for himself and the watermen, which the other hastened to distribute.

The meeting between the young bride and bridegroom was full of agitated delight. Abel looked perfectly happy, but thoughtful, as did Mrs. Crew, whose emotion found great relief in an occasional sigh—not the sigh of misgiving, but the relief of a joy-oppressed heart.

Trussell was, as usual, in very high spirits. He shook Randolph heartily by the hand, wished him

all sorts of happiness, and then cordially greeted the Welsh baronets. Besides Mrs. Clinton, there was another young lady present, the daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Crew's, a Miss Wilbraham, who acted as bridesmaid to Hilda.

Soon afterwards, all being in readiness, the bride prepared to set forth under the care of Abel Beechcroft, who, before they quitted the house, in an earnest tone, invoked a blessing on her head and on that of his nephew. And both felt that the blessing of so good a man would not be thrown away.

Cheered by the good wishes and smiling countenances of the groups through which they had passed, and enlivened by the sunshine, the party entered the church. Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine, with Mr. Rathbone and Mrs. Nettleship, were already standing beside the altar. The young couple advanced, and took the central place, and the church was instantly crowded with spectators. The service was admirably performed by a venerable clergyman—an old and valued friend of Abel's, and at its close, the concourse issued from the church, dividing into two lines, so as to allow a passage for the wedding train.

As soon as the happy couple were seen issuing hand-in-hand from the Gothic portal of the old church, a loud and joyous shout was raised by the assemblage, a couple of guns were fired on board the lighter, and the church bells rang forth a joyous peal.

It was a heart-cheering sight, and many a breast throbbed, and many an eye grew moist at beholding

